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GOOD! TAKE THIS BIRD ALONG. I'LL BE DOWN AFTER I CHANGE

BUT, DAD, HOW...?
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VOL. 10 FEBRUARY, 1949 No. 3

Book-Length Novel

Angel Island — **Inez Haynes Gillmore** — 10

Five desperate, earthbound men an isle where Love and Death were neighbors a day when wings fought free of fetters to make a strange new world.

Novelette

The Scarlet Plague — **Jack London** — 92

Across a sick world it had crept, leaving man and his works destroyed. Now, in the twilight of history, only one remembered —a blurred and faded picture of the death of our times.

The Readers' Viewpoint — 6

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Masters of Fantasy — **Neil Austin** — 91

M. P Shiel—High Priest of Phantasy

The Lawrence Portfolio — 119

Cover by Lawrence. Inside illustrations by Lawrence and Leydenfrost.

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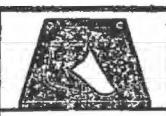
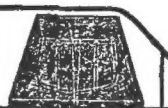
LEE TAILORED SIZES—A FIT FOR EVERY BUILD



LINED BIB POCKET

SAFETY FEATURE —PREVENTS LOSING ARTICLES

HIDDEN SEAM —CANNOT COME APART

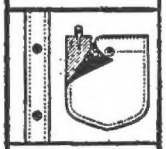


FORM FITTING BIB AND 4-IN-1 BIB POCKET

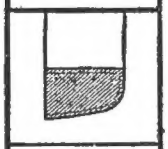
BI-SWI... FOR GR... ARM FREE...

REINFORCED SLEEVE OPENING FACINGS

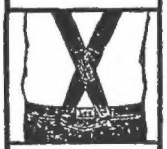
PATENTED SHIELD BACK



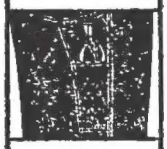
INDIVIDUAL PENCIL POCKET



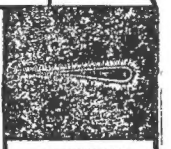
REINFORCED DOUBLE BOTTOM POCKETS FOR LONGER WEAR



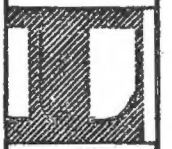
INTERWOVEN SUSPENDERS FOR FREE ACTION



COMBINATION RULE AND PLIERS POCKET



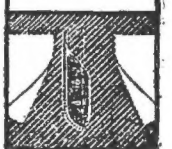
BUTTONHOLES ALL HEAVILY CORDED —NO TEARING



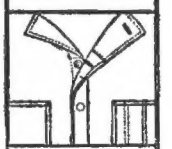
FRONT POCKETS OF HEAVY SAIL CLOTH

"SADDLE SHAPE" CROTCH

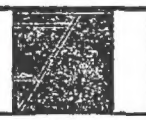
LINED HIP POCKETS —CONVENIENT HAMMER LOOP



SERGED FLY ... CORDED BUTTONHOLES



ALL BUTTONS INCLUDING SLEEVES ARE COVERED SCRATCH-PROOF



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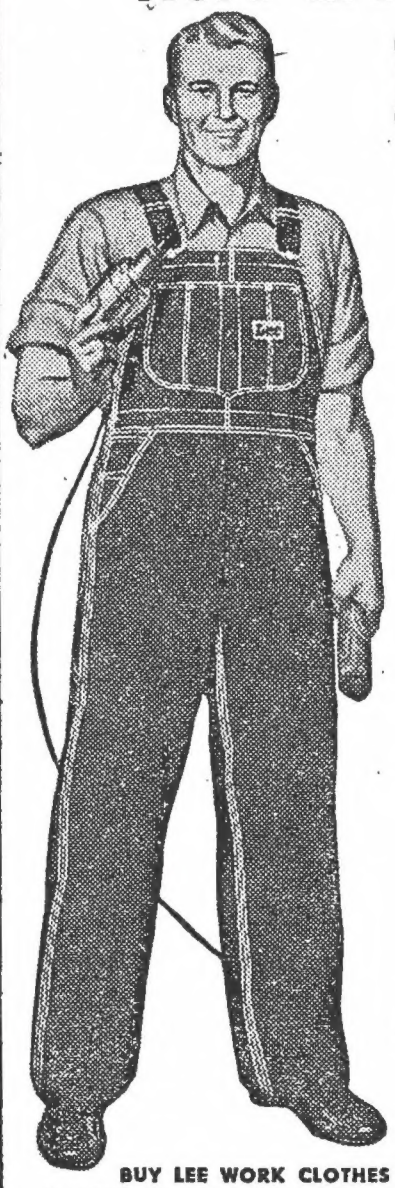

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The Readers' Viewpoint

Address comments to the Letter Editor, Famous Fantastic Mysteries, All-Fiction Field, Inc., 205 E. 42nd St., New York 17, New York

"THE GREAT VIRGIL"

October issue brought a smile of sheer pleasure to my Sphinx-like face. Some aspects of this civilization aren't so bad, after all, when one can get fare like this for a pittance—and nobody is out, I presume. Yes, it's a little chunk of Heaven, all right—this arrangement whereby, for the fourth part of a dollar, the best imaginative and creative talent in the land is arrayed for our enrichment. That's one reason why I am against the atom bomb: this lovely arrangement shouldn't be disturbed.

Thousands of books have been written about lions and the African veldt, but I would be willing to bet that none of them takes the reader deeper into a lion's mind than C. T. Stoneham's superb story, "The Lion's Way." It has never been my experience, at least, to feel that I was seeing the veldt out of a lion's eyes, except in moments when I have "dreamed" that I was merging myself with the beautiful beasts—that is, not until I read this story. And now Leo, under whose sign I was born, is understandable and lovable.

And by the way, those fans who occasionally complain that Finlay's work is sometimes less than breath-taking, I ask you, now, how perfect should perfection be! Take the illustration of the lioness and child on p. 23—words fail me 'momentarily'. Expressions of praise melt into one-long drawn "ahhhhh!" I don't see how even the Great Virgil could surpass this one. Some of the tenderness in the animal world has been caught in photos, but it is a shy thing that retreats from the camera's and the artist's eye. However, the Great Virgil has calmly fastened it on paper with his wizard hand. Let's be thankful for genius. The trouble with us fantastic devotees is that we've been fed a richer diet than most; we're spoiled.

In "The Human Angle," William Tenn has masterfully encapsuled some of the imponderable evil that lies beyond our easy-going rationalistic explanations. Good story, with the right amount of restraint.

Theodore Sturgeon's case-history of a failure, "That Low," is an astute analysis of a self-made misfit. Good.

But my rave of raves is reserved for Ray Bradbury's classic, "The Women." What a story, what a writer! He belongs in Neil Austin's Masters of Fantasy. He writes somewhat like the Angel Gabriel and his Satanic Majesty, in collaboration. "The Women" is a poem and a piece of music. Things that can't be written about, because there is no language, Bradbury writes about.

Lawrence's cover is superlative.

I am happy today. Human talent is really something to write home about.

DWIGHT AUGUSTINE.

P. O. Box 545,
Lima, Ohio.

A MEMORABLE ISSUE

After Theodora Du Bois' wonderful novel, "The Devil's Spoon," I had settled back, as the saying goes, for a long winter's nap. I found myself most agreeably awakened by the October FFM.

"The Lion's Way" was a triumph of writing over plot if there ever was one. I believe that we can safely add the name of C. T. Stoneham to the honor roll of authors who have successfully wrestled with old—but ever-fascinating—tale of jungle lads and lasses. In so far as I am concerned, that list is limited to a grand total of two other authors: Rudyard Kipling and Edgar Rice Burroughs. In the phrases of a song popular some time back, that ain't no bad bunch to hang out with.

"The Lion's Way" was a more mature novel than most of the Tarzan yarns, and was refreshingly free from Burroughs-isms, which are quite acceptable from ERB, but less effective in the hands of his hordes of imitators. I found the tale absorbing reading. (Much to my surprise, I must confess.) I do wish that Kaspa had defied the rules of fiction by ignoring the heroine and casting his lot with the lions, but I guess that is too much to hope for, even in fantastic stories.

Good as it most certainly was, the novel will have to take a back seat in this issue. Why? Simple enough—Ray Bradbury has come back to FFM! Happy day. Aside from his astonishing writing ability, Bradbury has also a quality that set Lovecraft, among others, apart from many of his talented contemporaries. That is the fact that his stories are based on true feelings; on things that he himself feels keenly, and not simply upon a trick convenient to the story at hand. With Lovecraft, the threads that connected his work are fairly obvious items, such as his hatred of the sea, and his fear of cold. Bradbury is a more complex critter in many ways, and probably a more vital writer. His work can stand in any company. I found "The Women," in this issue, up to his high standard. A beautiful job.

The other shorts round out a memorable issue. Tenn, in "The Human Angle," did a nice job on what by now has become a standard gambit in weird fiction, and thus a trifle obvious. "That Low" was okay—Sturgeon is always dependable, and occasionally brilliant.

(Continued on page 8)

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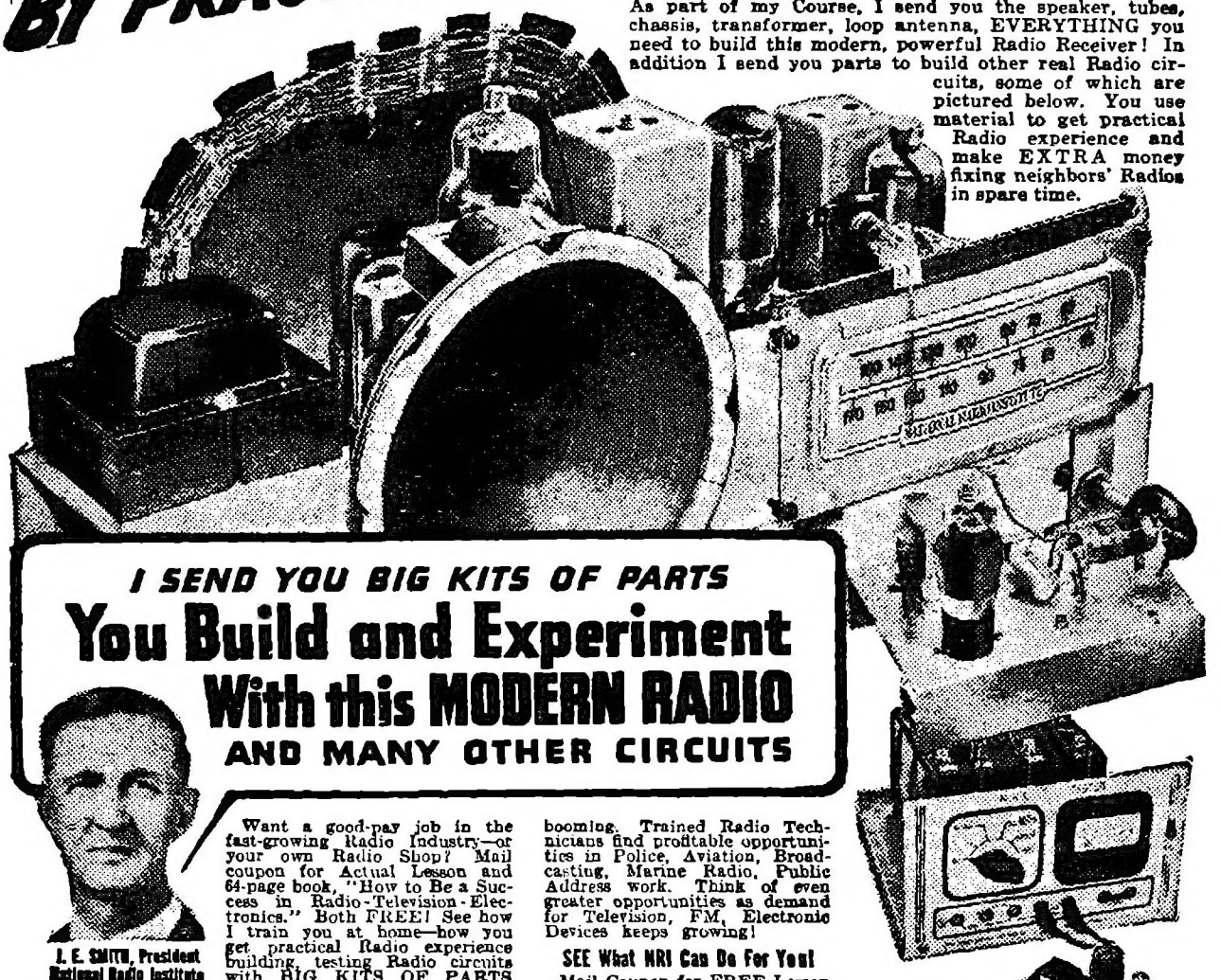

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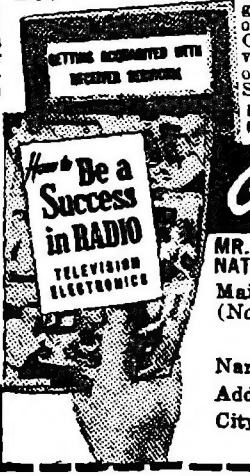

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(Continued from page 6)

Finlay's work on "The Lion's Way" is little short of superb. He caught the mood of the novel exceptionally well, I thought. His pic for the Bradbury gem is good, too, though I prefer his other style. Clyne is quite distinctive; both his and Lawrence's work on the interior are *muy bueno*. Boy, am I showering the compliments around this time! They are deserved, methinks.

The cover (here we go again) is most attractive. I hope that all the readers have taken notice of the fact that Lawrence is actually drawing *faces* on his cover-girls of late, rather than the usual lifeless, limp, and listless studies in harmonious vacancy. Good for him!

The profile is good, per usual. I was somewhat amused to note a remark in Thomas Beck's letter in the reader's section to the effect that fantasy magazines are now so numerous that they "clutter up" the newsstands. I wonder what newsstand *he* patronizes! His letter, be it noted, was an excellent one.

CHAD OLIVER.

Harper Star Route,
Kerrville, Texas.

"GEORGE WHITLEY" REPLIES

Unfortunately I did not receive the February copy of *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* until a short while ago. It is, therefore, somewhat late in the day for me to rush to my own defence. I am referring, as you may have guessed, to the letter headed "Australia Protests" from Mr. Stirling Macoboy of Sydney, criticising the dialect used by the supposed narrator in my story, "Boomerang."

Doubtless many of your readers, like myself, peruse an occasional sea story when there is nothing better to hand. Doubtless they are familiar with the excellent stories from the pen of Mr. Guy Gilpatrick. But, unlike myself, they will not be pained by the mutilation of the King's English by Captain Ball, Mr. Montgomery and Mr. Levy. Were I either a Scot or a marine engineer—or both—I should be pained even more by Mr. Glencannon's conversation and conduct.

At one time I used to be frightfully miffed by the Glencannon stories and used to regard them as a libel on the British Merchant Navy. Then common sense asserted itself. Much as I hate to have to admit it—some officers do talk like that. Not in the big ships, not in the employ of the companies that try, at times, to be more naval than the Royal Navy, but in the humble but essential tramp steamers. Lest I be accused of libelling the tramp fraternity as well as the Antipodeans I will assure you that your chances of boarding such vessels and finding them manned, or officered, by Gilpatrick characters, would be very slim. But the possibility is there.

Well—as Mr. Macoboy admits—a few Australians do talk like the narrator of "Boomerang." And in the event of a book-burning, which would almost certainly mean a certain slaughter of the educated as well, it is reasonable to suppose that anything smacking of culture would become—unfashionable. The standards of language and diction would deteriorate—and fast.

I admit that I may have caricatured, to a slight extent, the kind of language that one hears spoken on the Sydney waterfront. And it is not the kind of language that I should expect to hear spoken in Mr. Macoboy's drawing room—any more than he would expect to hear Cockney—and I live in Greater London—spoken in mine. But I shouldn't mind betting that if he cares to drop in for a friendly cup of tea twenty years or so after the rockets have come he will find that the survivors—if any—won't be using the kind of English made standard by the announcers of the various Broadcasting Companies and Corporations. Even now, in spite of universal education and the influence of the radio and the better films, the English spoken in all English speaking countries is deplorable. What will it be like once the schools, the broadcasting stations and the cinemas have been destroyed?

A. BERTRAM CHANDLER,
(George Whitley),
Troop 2nd Officer.

29 Cambridge Road,
Hounslow, Middlesex, England.

ABOUT EDISON MARSHALL

Readers who enjoyed "The Lion's Way" by C. T. Stoneham would surely love to read its sequel "Kaspa the Lion Man". The sequel is even better than "The Lion's Way". I might say that Lawrence's cover illustrating this novel is his best to date in my opinion.

One of the most popular writers of fiction who writes for such publications as *Argosy, Blue Book, Cosmopolitan, and American* is Edison Marshall. Mr. Marshall occasionally wrote in the realm of fantasy. His very finest book in this field was "Dian of the Lost Land". I hope to see it printed soon in F.F.M.

I need just a few issues to complete my files of *All-Story, Cavalier, Top-Notch, Adventure, Popular, Thrilling Adventures*, and 1923-1928 *Weird Tales*. I also need issues of *Thrill Book* (1919) and *Tales of Magic and Mystery* (1927-28) in order to have a complete set of all Fantasy magazines ever published in the United States and England. Other special wants are the two issues of *Unusual Stories* (1935) and the Aug. 1933 *Science Fiction Digest*. I would be glad to obtain any of the above magazines.

I might mention in closing that I have recently published "The Fabulous Faust Fanzine" in the interest of dealers, readers and collectors of the works of the late Frederick Faust. Most readers know Faust as Max Brand, Evan Evans, George Challis, Walter C. Butler, Peter Henry Morland, or as any one of some twenty other pseudonyms. Although an amateur magazine, this periodical is professional in content. It features an index of Faust's works which will be indispensable to libraries, fans, and collectors. I would be glad to hear from all interested individuals.

I share one objection to your publication with

(Continued on page 120)

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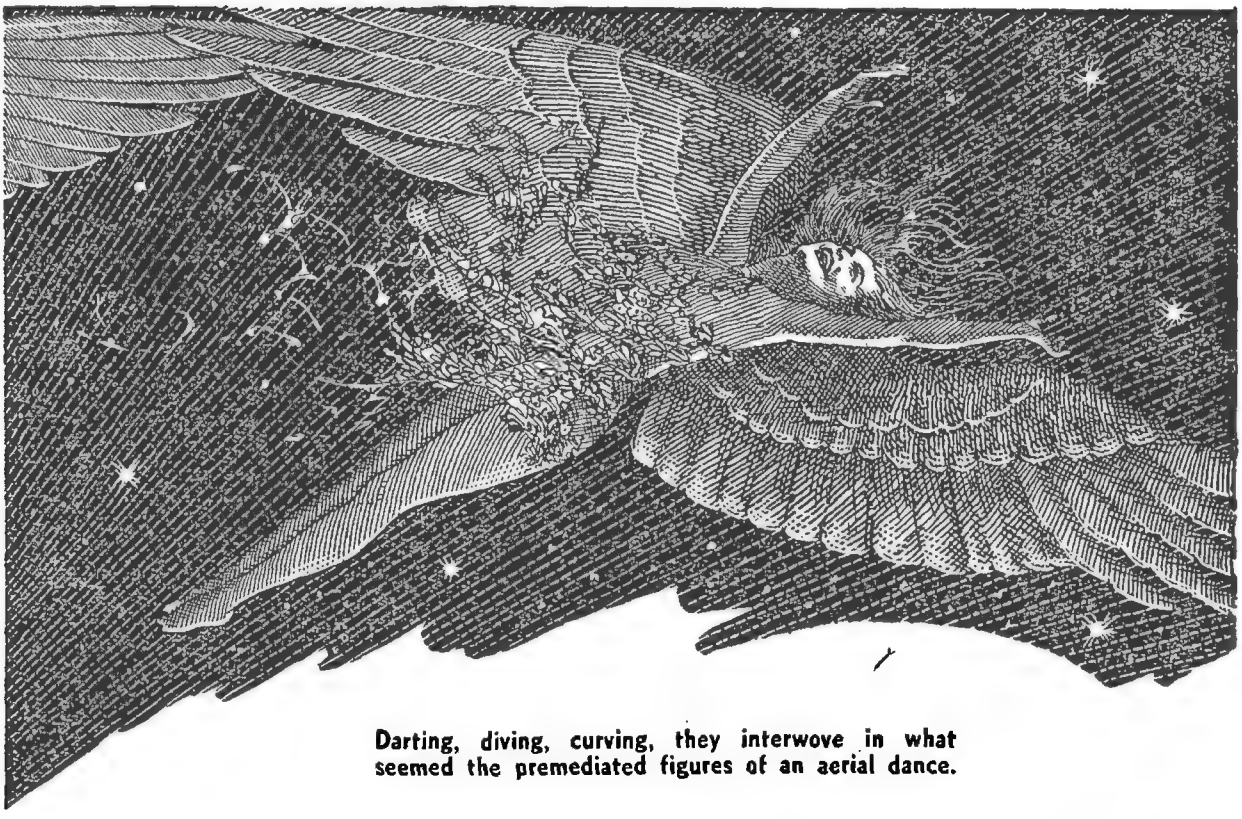

Darting, diving, curving, they interwove in what seemed the premediated figures of an aerial dance.

ANGEL ISLAND

By Inez Haynes Gillmore

CHAPTER I

ISLAND OF THE LOST

IT WAS the morning after the shipwreck. The five men still lay where they had slept. A long time had passed since anybody had spoken. A long time had passed since anybody had moved. Indeed, it looked almost as if they would never speak or move again. So bruised and bloodless of skin were they, so bleak and sharp of feature, so stark and hollow of eye, so rigid and moveless of limb that they might have been corpses. Mentally, too, they were almost moribund. They stared vacantly, straight out to sea. They stared with the unwinking fixedness of those whose gaze is caught in hypnotic trance.

It was Frank Merrill who broke the silence finally. Merrill still looked like a man of marble and his voice still kept its unnatural tone, level, monotonous. "If I could only forget the scream that Norton kid gave when he saw the big wave coming. It rings in my head. And the way his mother pressed his head down on her breast—oh, my God!"

His listeners knew that he was going to say this. They knew the very words in which he would put it. All through the night-watches he had said the same thing at intervals. The effect always was of a red-hot wire drawn down the frayed ends of their nerves. But again, one by one, they themselves fell into line.

"It was that old woman I remember," said Honey Smith. There were bruises, mottled blue and black, all over Honey's body. There was a falsetto whistling to Honey's voice. "That Irish granny! She

didn't say a word. Her mouth just opened until her jaw fell. Then the wave struck!" He paused. He tried to control the falsetto whistling. But it got away from him. "God, I bet she was dead before it touched her!"

"That was the awful thing about it," Pete Murphy groaned. It was as inevitable now as an antiphonal chorus. Pete's little scarred scratched, bleeding body rocked back and forth. "The women and children! But it all came so quick. I was close beside 'the Newlyweds.' She put her arms around his neck and said, 'Your face'll be the last I'll look on in this life, dearest!' And she stayed there looking into his eyes. It was the last face she saw, all right." Pete stopped and his brow blackened. "While she was sick in the stateroom, he'd been looking into a good many faces besides hers!"

"I don't seem to remember anything definite about it," Billy Fairfax said. It was strange to hear that beating pulse of horror in Billy's mild tones and to see that look of terror frozen on his mild face. "I had the same feeling that I've had in nightmares lots of times—that it was horrible—and—I didn't think I could stand it another moment—but—of course it would soon end—like all nightmares—and I'd wake up."

Without reason, they fell again into silence.

They had passed through two distinct psychological changes since the sea spewed them up. When consciousness returned, they gathered into a little terror-stricken, gibbering group. At first they babbled. At first inarticulate, confused, they dripped strings of mere words; expletives, exclamations, detached phrases, broken clauses, sentences that started with subjects and trailed, unpredicated, to stupid silence; sentences beginning subjectless and hobbling to futile conclusion.

It was as though mentally they slavered. But every phrase, however confused and inept, voiced their panic, voiced the long strain of their fearful buffeting and their terrific final struggle. And every clause, whether sentimental, sacriligeous, or profane, breathed their wonder, their pathetic, poignant, horrified wonder, that such things could be.

All this was intensified by the anarchy of sea and air and sky, by the incessant explosion of the waves, by the wind which seemed to sweep from end to end of a liquefying universe, by a downpour which threatened to beat their sodden bodies to pulp, by all the connotation of terror that lay in the darkness and in their unguarded condition on a barbarous, semi-tropical coast.

Then came the long, log-like stupor of their exhaustion.

With the day, vocabulary, grammar, logic returned. They still iterated and reiterated their experiences, but with a coherence which gradually grew to consistence. In between, however, came sudden, sinister attacks of dumbness.

"I remember wondering," Billy Fairfax broke their last silence suddenly, "what would become of the ship's cat."

This was typical of the astonishing fatuity which marked their comments. Billy Fairfax had made the remark about the ship's cat a dozen times. And a dozen times, it had elicited from the others similar chatter, of insignificant haphazard detail which began anywhere and ended nowhere.

But this time it brought no comment. Perhaps it served to stir faintly an atrophied analytic sense. No one of them had yet lost the shudder and the thrill which lay in his own narrative. But the experiences of the others had begun to bore and irritate.

There came after this one remark another half hour of stupid and readjusting silence.

The storm, which had seemed to worry the whole universe in its grip, had died finally but it had died hard. On a quieted earth, the sea alone showed signs of revolution. The waves, monstrous towering, swollen, were still marching on to the beach with a machine-like regularity that was swift and ponderous at the same time. One on one, another on another, they came, not an instant between. When they crested, involuntarily the five men braced themselves as for a shock. When they crashed, involuntarily the five men started as if a bomb had struck.

Beyond the wave-line, under a cover of foam, the jaded sea lay feebly palpitant, like an old man asleep. Not far off, sucked close to a ragged reef, stretched the black bulk that had once been the *Brian Boru*. Continually, it leaped out of the water, threw itself like a live creature, breast-forward on the rock, clawed furiously at it, retreated a little more shattered, settled back in the trough, brooded an instant, then with the courage of the tortured and the strength of the dying reared and sprang at the rock again.

Up and down the beach stretched an unbroken line of wreckage. Here and there, things, humanly shaped, lay prone or

supine or twisted into crazy attitudes. Some had been flung far up the slope beyond the water-line. Others, rolling back in the torrent of the tide, engaged in a ceaseless, grotesque frolic with the foamy waters. Out of a mass of wood caught between rocks, and rising shoulder-high above it, a woman's head, livid, rigid, stared with a fixed gaze out of her dead eyes straight at their group. Her blond hair had already dried; it hung in stiff, salt-clogged masses that beat wildly about her face. Beyond, something rocking between two wedged sea-chests, but concealed by them, constantly kicked a sodden foot into the air. Straight ahead, the naked body of a child flashed to the crest of each wave.

cidity, mocked with her serenity and her peace.

For them she was dead—dead like those whom we no longer trust.

The sun was racing up a sky smooth and clear as gray glass. It dropped on the torn green sea a shimmer that was almost dazzling, but there was something incongruous about that—as though Nature had covered her victim with a spangled scarf. It brought out millions of sparkles in the white sand; and there seemed something calculating about that—as though she were bribing them with jewels to forget.

"Say, let's cut out this business of going over and over it," said Ralph Addington with a sudden burst of irritability. "I guess

Five desperate, earthbound men . . . an isle where Love and Death were neighbors . . . a day when wings fought free of fetters to make a strange new world. . . .

ALL this destruction ran from north to south between two reefs of black rock. It edged a broad bow-shaped expanse of sand, snowy, powdery, hummocky, netted with wefts of black seaweed that had dried to a rattling stiffness. To the east, this silvery crescent merged finally with a furry band of vegetation which screened the whole foreground of the island.

The day was perfect and the scene beautiful. They had watched the sun come up over the trees at their back. And it was as if they had seen a sunrise for the first time in their lives. To them, it was not beautiful nor familiar; it was sinister and strange. A chill, that was not of the dawn but of death itself, lay over everything. The morning wind was the breath of the tomb, the smells that came to them from the island bore the taint of mortality, the very sunshine seemed icy.

They suffered—the five survivors of the night's tragedy—with a scarifying sense of disillusion with Nature. It was as though a beautiful, tender, and fondly loved mother had turned murderously on her children, had wounded them nearly to death, had then tried to woo them to her breast again. The loveliness of her, the mindless, heartless, soulless loveliness, as of a maniac tamed, mocked at the agonies, mocked with her gentle indifference, mocked with her self-satisfied pla-

I could give up the ship's cat in exchange for a girl or two." Addington's face was livid; a muscular contraction kept pulling his lips away from his white teeth; he had the look of a man who grins satanically at regular intervals.

By a titanic mental effort, the others connected this explosion with Billy Fairfax's last remark. It was the first expression of an emotion so small as ill-humor. It was, moreover, the first excursion out of the beaten path of their egotisms. It cleared the atmosphere a little of that murky cloud of horror which blurred the sunlight. Three of the other four men—Honey Smith, Frank Merrill, Pete Murphy—actually turned and looked at Ralph Addington. Perhaps that movement served to break the hideous, hypnotic spell of the sea.

"Right-o!" Honey Smith agreed weakly. It was audible in his voice, the effort to talk sanely of sane things, and in the slang of every day. "Addington's on. Let's can it! Here we are and here we're likely to stay for a few days. In the meantime, we've got to live. How are we going to pull it off?"

Everybody considered his brief harangue; for an instant, it looked as though this consideration was taking them all back into aimless meditation. Then, "That's right," Billy Fairfax took it up heroically.

"Say, Merrill," he added in almost a conversational tone, "what are our chances? I mean, how soon do we get off?"

This was the first question anybody had asked. It added its infinitesimal weight to the wave of normality which was settling over them all. Everybody visibly concentrated, listening for the answer.

It came after an instant, although Frank Merrill palpably pulled himself together to attack the problem. "I was talking that matter over with Miner just yesterday," he said. "Miner said—God, I wonder where he is now—and what about his dependent blind mother in Nebraska."

"Cut that out," Honey Smith ordered crisply.

"We—we—were trying to figure our chances in case of a wreck," Frank Merrill continued slowly. "You see, we're out of the beaten path—way out. Those days of drifting cooked our goose. You can never tell, of course, what will happen in the Pacific where there are so many tramp craft. On the other hand—" He paused. It was evident, now, that he had something to expound, that Merrill had himself almost under command, that his hesitation arose from another cause. "Well, we're all men. I guess it's up to me to tell you the truth. The sooner you all know the worst, the sooner you'll pull yourselves together. I shouldn't be surprised if we didn't see a ship for several weeks—perhaps months."

Another of their mute intervals fell upon them. Dozens of waves flashed and crashed their way up the beach; but now they trailed an iridescent network of foam over the lilac-gray sand. The sun raced high; but now it poured a flood of light on the green-gray water. The air grew bright and brighter. The earth grew warm and warmer. Blue came into the sky, deepened—and the sea reflected it. Suddenly the world was one huge glittering bubble, half of which was the brilliant azure sky and half the burnished azure sea. None of the five men looked at the sea and sky now. The other four were considering Frank Merrill's words and he was considering the other four.

"Lord!" Ralph Addington exclaimed suddenly. "Think of being in a place like this six months or a year without a woman around! Why, we'll be savages at the end of three months." He snarled his words. It was as if a new aspect of the situation—an aspect more crucially alarming than any other—had just struck him.

"Yes," said Frank Merrill. And for a moment, so much had he recovered himself, he reverted to his academic type. "Aside from the regret and horror and shame that I feel to have survived when every woman drowned, I confess to that feeling, too. Women keep up the standards of life. It would have made a great difference with us if there were only one or two women here."

"If there'd been five, you mean," Ralph Addington amended. A feeble, white-toothed smile gleamed out of his dark beard. He, too, had pulled himself together; this smile was not muscular contraction. "One or two, and the fat would be in the fire."

Nobody added anything to this. But now the other three considered Ralph Addington's words with the same effort toward concentration that they had brought to Frank Merrill's. Somehow, his smile—that flashing smile which showed so many teeth against a background of dark beard—pointed his words uncomfortably.

Of them all, Ralph Addington was perhaps the least popular. This was strange; for he was a thorough sport, a man of a wide experience. He was salesman for a business concern that manufactured a white shoe-polish, and he made the rounds of the Oriental countries every year. He was a careful and intelligent observer both of men and things. He was widely if not deeply read. He was an interesting talker. He could, for instance, meet each of the other four on some point of mental contact.

A superficial knowledge of sociology and a practical experience with many races brought him and Frank Merrill into frequent discussion. His interest in all athletic sports and his first-hand information in regard to them made common ground between him and Billy Fairfax. With Honey Smith, he talked business, adventure, and romance; with Pete Murphy, German opera, French literature, American muck-raking, and Japanese art. The flaw which made him alien was not of personality but of character.

He presented the anomaly of a man scrupulously honorable in regard to his own sex, and absolutely codeless in regard to the other. Every woman attracted him. No woman held him. Any new woman, however plain, immediately eclipsed her predecessor, however beautiful. The fact that this interest took precedence over all others was quite enough to make him vaguely unpopular with men. But as in addition he was a type which many women find interesting, it is likely that an instinc-

tive jealousy, unformulated but inevitable, biased other men's judgment.

He was a typical businessman; but in appearance he represented the conventional idea of an artist. Tall, muscular, graceful, hair thick and a little wavy, eyes liquid and long-lashed, women called him "interesting." There was, moreover, always a slight touch of the picturesque in his clothes; he was master of the small, charming ruses which delight flirtatious women.

IN BRIEF, men were always divided in their own minds in regard to Ralph Addington. They knew that, constantly, he broke every canon of that mysterious flexible, half-developed code which governs their relations with women. But no law of that code compelled them to punish him for ungenerous treatment of somebody's wife or sister. Had he been dishonorable with them, had he once borrowed without paying, had he once cheated at cards, they would have ostracized him forever. He had done none of these things, of course.

"By jiminy!" exclaimed Honey Smith, "how I hate the unfamiliar air of everything. I'd like to put my lamps on something I know. A ranch and a round-up would look pretty good to me at this moment. Or a New England farmhouse with the cows coming home. That would set me up quicker than a highball."

"The University campus would seem like heaven to me," Frank Merrill confessed drearily, "and I'd got so the very sight of it nearly drove me insane."

"The Great White Way for mine," said Pete Murphy, "at night—all the signs flashing, the streets jammed with cars, the sidewalks crowded with boobs. ."

"Say," Billy Fairfax burst out suddenly; and for the first time since the shipwreck a voice among them carried a clear businesslike note of curiosity. "You fellows troubled with your eyes? As sure as shooting, I'm seeing things. Out in the west there—black spots—any of the rest of you get them?"

One or two of the group glanced cursorily backward. A pair of perfunctory "Noes!" greeted Billy's inquiry.

"Well, I'm daffy, then," Billy decided. He went on with a sudden abnormal volubility. "Queer thing about it is, I've been seeing them the whole morning. I've just got back to that point where I realized there was something wrong. I've always had a remarkably far sight." He rushed on at the same speed; but now he had the air of one who is trying to reconcile puzzling phenomena with natural laws. "And it seems as if—but there are no birds large enough—wish it would stop, though. Perhaps you get a different angle of vision down in these parts. Did any of you ever hear of that Russian peasant who could see the four moons of Jupiter without a glass? The astronomers tell about him."

Nobody answered his question. But it seemed suddenly to bring them back to the normal.

"See here, boys," Frank Merrill said, an unexpected note of authority in his voice, "we can't sit here all the morning like this. We ought to rig up a signal, in case any ship— Moreover, we've got to get together and save as much as we can. We'll be hungry in a little while. We can't lie down on that job too long."

Honey Smith jumped to his feet. "Well, Lord knows, I want to get busy. I don't want to do any more thinking, thank you. How I ache! Every muscle in my body is raising particular Hades at this moment."

The others pulled themselves up, groaned, stretched, eased protesting muscles. Suddenly Honey Smith pounded Billy Fairfax on the shoulder. "You're IT, Billy," he said and ran down the beach. In another instant they were all playing tag. This changed after five minutes to baseball with a lemon for a ball and a chair-leg for a bat. A mood of wild exhilaration caught them. The inevitable psychological reaction had set in. Their morbid horror of Nature vanished in its vitalizing flood like a cobweb in a flame. Never had sea or sky or earth seemed more lovely, more lusciously, voluptuously lovely. The sparkle of the salt wind tingled through their bodies like an electric current. The warmth in the air lapped them like a hot bath. Joy-in-life flared up in them to such a height that it kept them running and leaping meaninglessly. They shouted wild phrases to each other. They burst into song. At times they yelled scraps of verse.

"We'll come across something to eat soon," said Frank Merrill, breathing hard. "Then we'll be all right."

"I feel—better—for that run—already," panted Billy Fairfax. "Haven't seen a black spot for five minutes."

Nobody paid any attention to him, and in a few minutes he was paying no attention to himself. Their expedition was offering too many shocks of horror and pathos. Fortunately the change in their mood held. It was, indeed, as unnatural as their tor-

por, and must inevitably bring its own reaction. But after each of these tragic encounters, they recovered buoyancy, recovered it with a resiliency that had something almost light-headed about it.

"We won't touch any of *them* now," Frank Merrill ordered peremptorily. "We can attend to *them* later. They'll keep coming back. What we've got to do is to think of the future. Get everything out of the water that looks useful—immediately useful," he corrected himself. "Don't bother about anything above high-water mark—that's there to stay. And work like hell, every one of you!"

Work they did for three hours, worked with a kind of frenzied delight in action and pricked on by a ravenous hunger. In and out of the combers they dashed, playing a desperate game of chance with Death. Helter-skelter, hit or miss, in a blind orgy of rescue, at first they pulled out everything they could reach. Repeatedly, Frank Merrill stopped to lecture them on the foolish risks they were taking, on the stupidity of such a waste of energy. "Save what we need!" he iterated and reiterated, bellowing to make himself heard. "What we can use now—canned stuff, tools, clothes! This lumber'll come back on the next tide."

He seemed to keep a supervising eye on all of them; for his voice, shouting individual orders, boomed constantly over the crash of the waves. Realizing finally that he was the man of the hour, the others ended by following his instructions blindly.

Merrill, himself, was no shirk. His strength seemed prodigious. When any of the others attempted to land something too big to handle alone, he was always near to help; and yet, unaided, he accomplished twice as much as the busiest.

Frank Merrill, professor of a small university in the Middle West, was the scholar of the group, a sociologist traveling in the Orient to study conditions. He was not especially popular with his companions, although they admired him and deferred to him. On the other hand, he was not unpopular, it was more that they stood a little in awe of him.

On his mental side, he was a typical academic product. Normally his conversation, both in subject-matter and in verbal form, bore toward pedantry. It was one curious effect of this crisis that he had reverted to the crisp Anglo-Saxon of his farm-nurtured youth.

On his moral side, he was a typical reformer, a man of impeccable private character, solitary, a little austere. He had never married; he had never sought the company of women, and in fact he knew nothing about them. Women had had no more bearing on his life than the fourth dimension.

On his physical side he was a wonder.

Six feet four in height, two hundred and fifty pounds in weight, he looked the viking. He had carried to the verge of middle age the habits of an athletic youth. It was said that half his popularity in his university world was due to the respect he commanded from the students because of his extraordinary feats in walking and lifting. He was impressive, almost handsome. His face was regularly if coldly featured. He was ascetic in type. Moreover, the look of the born disciplinarian lay on him. His blue eyes carried a glacial gleam. The lines of his mouth showed iron.

After a while, Honey Smith came across a water-tight tin of matches. "Great Scott, fellows!" he exclaimed. "I'm hungry enough to drop. Let's knock off for a while and feed our faces. How about mock turtle, chicken livers, and red-headed duck?"

They built a fire, opened cans of soup and vegetables.

"The Waldorf has nothing on that," Pete Murphy said when they stopped, gorged.

"Say, remember to look for smokes, all of you," Ralph Addington admonished them suddenly.

"You betchu!" groaned Honey Smith, and his look became lugubrious. But his instinct to turn to the humorous side of things immediately crumpled his brown face into its attractive smile. "Say, aren't we going to be the immaculate little lads? I can't think of a single bad habit we can acquire in this place. No smokes, no drinks, few if any eats—and not a girl in sight. Let's organize the Robinson Crusoe Purity League, Parlor Number One."

"Oh, gee!" Pete Murphy burst out. "It's just struck me. The Wilmington 'Blue' is lost forever—it must have gone down with everything else."

Nobody spoke. It was an interesting indication of how their sense of values had already shifted that the loss to the world of one of its biggest diamonds seemed the least of their minor disasters.

"Perhaps that's what hoodooed us," Pete went on. "You know they say the Wilmington 'Blue' brought bad luck to everybody who owned it. Anyway, battle, murder, and sudden death have followed it right along the line down through history. Oh, it's been a busy cake of ice—take it from muh! Hope the mermaids fight shy of it."

"The Wilmington 'blue' isn't alone in that," Ralph Addintgon said. "All big diamonds have raised hell. You ought to hear some of the stories they tell in India about the rajah's treasures. Some of those briolettes—you listen long enough and you come to the conclusion that the sooner all the big stones are cut up, the better."

"I bet this one isn't gone," said Pete. "Anybody take me? That's the contrariety of the beasts—they won't stay lost. We'll find that stone yet—somewhere among our loot. The first thing we know, we'll be all knifing each other to get it."

"Time's up," called Frank Merrill. "Sorry to drive you, but we've got to keep at it as long as the light lasts. After today, though, we need work only at high water. Between times, we can explore the island—" He spoke as if he were wheedling a group of boys with the promise of play.

"Select a site for our capital city"—Honey Smith helped him out facetiously. "Lay out streets—begin to excavate for the church, town hall, schoolhouse, and library."

"The first thing to do now," Frank Merrill went on, as usual ignoring all facetiousness, "is to put up a signal."

Under his direction, they nailed a pair of sheets, one at the southern, the other at the northern reef, to saplings which they stripped of branches. Then they went back to the struggle for salvage.

The fascination of work—and of such novel work—still held them. They labored the rest of the morning, stopped for a brief lunch, went at it again in the afternoon, paused for dinner, and worked far into the evening. Once they stopped long enough to build a huge signal fire on the beach. When they turned in, not one of them but nursed torn and blistered hands. Not one of them but fell asleep the instant he laid down.

They slept until long after sunrise.

IT WAS Pete Murphy who waked them. "Say, who was it, yesterday, talked about seeing black spots? I'm hanged if I'm not hipped too. When I woke just before sunrise, there were black things off there in the west. Of course I was almost dead to the world, but—"

"Like great birds?" Billy Fairfax asked with interest.

"Exactly."

"Bats from your belfry," commented Ralph Addington.

"Too much sunlight," Frank Merrill explained. "Lucky thing, we don't any of us have to wear glasses. We'd certainly be up against it in this double glare. Sand and sun both, you see! And you can thank whatever instinct that's kept you all in training. This shipwreck is the most perfect case I've ever seen of the survival of the fittest."

And in fact, they were all, except for Pete Murphy, big men, and all, even he, active, strong muscled, and in the pink of condition.

The huge tide had not entirely subsided, but there was a perceptible diminution in the height of the waves. Up beyond the water-line lay a fresh installment of jetsam. But, as before, they labored only to save the flotsam. They worked all the morning.

In the afternoon, they dug a huge trench. Frank Merrill presiding, they buried the dead with appropriate ceremony.

"Thank God, that's done," Ralph Addington said with a shudder. "I hate death and everything to do with it."

"Yes, we'll all be more normal now *they're* gone," Frank Merrill added. "And the sooner everything that reminds us of them is gone the better."

"Say," Honey Smith burst out the next morning. "Funny thing happened to me in the middle of the night. I woke out of a sound sleep—don't know why—woke with a start as if somebody'd shaken me—felt something brush me so close—well, it touched me. I was so dead that I had to work like the merry Hades to open my eyes—seemed as if it was a full minute before I could lift my eyelids. When I could make things out—damned if there wasn't a bird—a big bird—the biggest bird I ever saw in my life—three times as big as any eagle—flying over the water."

Nothing could better have indicated Honey's mental turmoil than the fact that he talked in broken phrases rather than in his usual clear, swift-footed, curt sentences.

Nobody noticed this. Nobody offered comment. Nobody seemed surprised. In fact, all the psychological areas which explode in surprise and wonder were temporarily deadened.

"As sure as I live," Honey continued indignantly, "that bird's wings must have extended twenty feet above its head."

"Oh, get out!" said Ralph Addington perfunctorily.

"As sure as I'm sitting here," Honey went on earnestly. "I heard a woman's laugh. Any of you others get it?"

The sense of humor, it seemed, was not extinct. Honey's companions burst into roars of laughter. For the rest of the morning, they joked Honey about his hallucination. And Honey, who always responded in kind to any badinage, received this in silence. In fact, wherever he could, a little pointedly, he changed the subject.

Honey Smith was the type of man whom everybody jokes, partly because he received it with such good humor, partly because he turned it back with so ready and so charming a wit. Also it gave his fellow creatures a gratifying sense of equality to pick humorous flaws in one so manifestly a darling of the gods.

Honey Smith possessed not a trace of genius, not a suggestion of what is popularly termed "temperament". He had no mind to speak of, and not more than the usual amount of character. In fact, but for one thing, he was an average person. That one thing was personality—and personality he possessed to an extraordinary degree. Indeed, there seemed to be something mysteriously compelling about this personality of Honey's. The whole world of creatures felt its charm. Dumb beasts fawned on him. Children clung to him. Old people lingered near as though they could light dead fires in the blaze of his radiant youth. Men hobnobbed with him; his charm brushed off on to the dryest and dullest so that, temporarily, they too bloomed with personality. As for women—His appearance among them was the signal for a noiseless social cataclysm. They slipped and slid in his direction as helplessly as if an inclined plane had opened under their feet. They fluttered in circles around him like birds around a light. If he had been allowed to follow the pull of his inclination, they would have held a subsidiary place in his existence. For he was practical, balanced, sane. He had, moreover, the tendency toward temperance of the born athlete. Besides all this, his main interests were man-interests. But women would not let him alone. He had but to look and the thing was done. Wreaths hung on every balcony for Honey Smith. He was a little lazy, almost discourteously uninterested in his attitude towards the individual female; for he had never had to exert himself.

It is likely that all this personal popularity would have been the result of that trick of personality. But many good fairies had been summoned to Honey's christening; he had good looks besides. He was really tall, although his broad shoulders seemed to reduce him to medium height. Brown-skinned, brown-eyed, brown haired, his skin was as smooth as satin, his eyes as clear as crystal, his hair as thick as fur. His expression had tremendous sparkle. But his main physical charm was a smile which crumpled his brown face into an engaging irregularity of contour and lighted it with an expression brilliant with mirth and friendliness.

He was a true soldier of fortune. In the ten years which his business career covered he had engaged in a score of business ventures. He had lost two fortunes. Born in the West, educated in the East, he had flashed from coast to coast so often that he himself would have found it hard to say where he belonged.

He was the admiration and the wonder and the paragon and the criterion of his friend Billy Fairfax, who had trailed his meteoric course through college and who, when the *Brian Boru* went down, was accompanying him on his most recent adventure—a globe-trotting trip in the interests of a moving-picture company. Socially they made an excellent team. For Billy contributed money, birth, breeding, and position to augment Honey's initiative, enterprise, audacity, and charm. Billy Fairfax offered other contrasts quite as striking. On his physical side, he was shapelessly strong and hopelessly ugly, a big, shock-headed blond. On his personal side "mere mutt-man" was the way one girl put it, "too much of a damned gentleman" Honey Smith said to him regularly.

Billy Fairfax was not, however, without charm of a certain shy, evasive, slow-going kind; and he was not without his own distinction. His huge fortune had permitted him to cultivate many expensive sports and sporting tastes. His studs and kennels and strings of polo ponies were famous. He was a polo-player well above the average and an aviator not far below it.

Pete Murphy, the fifth of the group, was the delight of them all. The carriage of a bantam rooster, the courage of a lion, more brain than he could stagger under; a disposition fiery, mercurian, sanguine, witty; he was made, according to Billy Fairfax's dictim, of "wire and brass tacks," and he possessed what Honey Smith (who himself had no mean gift in that direction) called "the gift of gab." He lived by writing magazine articles. Also he wrote fiction, verse, and drama. Also he was a painter. Also he was a musician. In short, he was an Irishman.

Artistically, he had all the perception of the Celt plus the acquired sapience of the painter's training. If he could have existed in a universe which consisted entirely of sound and color, a universe inhabited only by disembodied spirits, he would have been its ablest citizen; but he was utterly disqualified to live in a human world. He was absolutely incapable of judging people. His tendency was to underestimate men and to overestimate women. His life bore all the scars inevitable to such an instinct. Women, in particular, had played ducks and drakes with his career.

Weakly chivalrous, mindlessly gallant, he lacked the faculty of learning by experience—especially where the other sex was concerned. "Predestined to be stung!" was his first wife's laconic comment on her ex-husband. She, for instance, was undoubtedly the blameworthy one in their marital failure, but she had managed to extract a ruinous alimony from him. Twice married and twice divorced, he was traveling through the Orient to write a series of muckraking articles and, incidentally if possible, to forget his last unhappy matrimonial venture.

Physically, Pete was the black type of Celt. The wild thatch of his scrubbing-brush hair shone purple in the light. Scrape his face as he would, the purple shadow of his beard seemed ingrained in his white skin. Black-browed and black-lashed, he had the luminous blue-gray-green eyes of the colleen. There was a curious untamable quality in his look that was the mixture of two mad strains, the aloofness of the Celt and the aloofness of the genius.

THREE weeks passed. The clear, warm-cool, lucid, sunny weather kept up. The ocean flattened gradually. Twice every twenty-four hours the tide brought treasure; but it brought less and less every day. Occasionally came a stiffened human reminder of their great disaster. But calloused as they were now to these experiences, the men buried with hasty ceremony and forgot.

By this time an incongruous collection stretched in parallel lines above the high-water mark. "Something, anything, everything—and then some," remarked Honey Smith. Wood wreckage of all descriptions, acres of furniture, broken, split, blistered, discolored, swollen; piles of carpets, rugs, towels, bed-linen, stained, faded, shrunken, torn; files of swollen mattresses, pillows, cushions, life-preservers; heaps of table-silver and kitchen-ware tarnished and rusty; mounds of china and glass; mountains of tinned goods; barrels, boxes, books, suit-cases, leather bags; trunks and trunks and more trunks; for, mainly, the trunks had saved themselves.

Part of the time, in between tides, they tried to separate the grain of this huge collection of lumber from the chaff; part of the time they made exploring trips into the interior. At night they sat about their huge fire and talked.

The island proved to be about twenty miles in length by seven in width. It was uninhabited and there were no large animals on it. It was Frank Merrill's theory that it was the exposed peak of a huge extinct volcano. In the center, filling the crater, was a little fresh water lake. The island was heavily wooded; but in contour it presented only diminutive contrasts of hill and valley. And except as the semi-tropical foliage offered novelties of leaf and flower, the beauties of unfamiliar shapes and colors, it did not seem particularly interesting. Ralph Addington was the guide of these expeditions. From this tree, he pointed out, the South Sea Islander manufactured the tappa cloth, from that the poeepooee, from yonder the arva. Honey Smith used to say that the only depressing thing about these trips was the utter silence of the gorgeous birds which they saw on every side. On the other hand, they extracted what comfort they could from Merrill's and Addington's assurance that, should the ship's supply give out, they could live comfortably enough on birds' eggs, fruit, and fish.

Sorting what Honey Smith called the "ship duffle" was one prolonged adventure. At first they made little progress; for all five of them gathered over each important find, chattering like girls. Each man followed the bent of his individual instinct for acquisitiveness. Frank Merrill picked out books, paper, writing materials, of every sort. Ralph Addington ran to clothes. The habit of the man with whom it is a business policy to appear well-dressed maintained itself; even in their Eveless Eden, he presented a certain tailored smartness. Billy Fairfax selected kitchen utensils and tools. Later, he came across a box filled with tennis rackets, nets, and balls. The rackets' strings had snapped and the balls were dead. He began immediately to restring the rackets, to make new balls from twine, to lay out a court. Like true soldiers of fortune, Honey Smith and Pete Murphy made no special

collection; they looted for mere loot's sake.

One day, in the midst of one of their raids, Honey Smith yelled a surprised and triumphant, "By jiminy!" The others showed no signs of interest. Honey was an alarmist; the treasure of the moment might prove to be a Japanese print or a corkscrew. But as nobody stirred or spoke, he called, "The Wilmington Blue!"

These words carried their inevitable magic. His companions dropped everything; they swarmed about him.

Honey held on his palm what, in the brilliant sunlight, looked like a globe of blue fire, a fire that emitted rainbows instead of sparks.

He passed it from hand to hand. It seemed a miracle that the fingers which touched it did not burst into flame. For a moment the five men might have been five children.

"Well," said Pete Murphy, "according to all fiction precedent, the rest of us ought to get together immediately, if not a little sooner, and murder you, Honey."

"Go as far as you like," said Honey, dropping the stone into the pocket of his flannel shirt. "Only, if anybody really gets peeved about this hunk of carbon, I'll give it to him."

For a while life flowed wonderfully. The men labored with a joy-in-work at which they themselves marveled. Their out-of-doors existence showed its effects in a condition of glowing health. Honey Smith changed first to a brilliant red, then to a uniform coffee brown, and last to a shining bronze which was the mixture of both these colors. Pete Murphy grew one crop of freckles, then another and still another until Honey offered to "excavate" his features. Ralph Addington developed a rich, subcutaneous, golden-umber glow which made him seem, in connection with an occasional unconventionality of costume, more than ever like the schoolgirl's idea of an artist. Billy Fairfax's blond hair bleached to flaxen. His complexion deepened in tone to a permanent pink. This, in contrast with the deep clear blue of his eyes, gave him a kind of out-of-doors comeliness. But Frank Merrill was the surprise of them all. He not only grew handsomer, he grew younger; a magnificent, towering, copper-colored monolith of a man, whose gray eyes were as clear as mountain springs, whose white teeth turned his smile to a flash of light. Constantly they patrolled the beach, pairs of them, studying the ocean for sight of a distant sail, selecting at intervals a new spot on which at night to start fires, or by day to erect signals. They bubbled with spirits. They laughed and talked without cessation. The condition which Ralph Addington had deplored, the absence of women, made at first for social relaxation, for psychological rest.

"Lord, I never noticed before—until I got this chance to get off and think of it—what a damned bother women are," Honey Smith said one day. "Of all the sexes that roam the earth, as George Ade says, I like them least. What a mess they make of your time and your work, always requiring so much attention, always having to be waited on, always dropping things, always so much foolish fuss and ceremony, always asking such footless questions and never hearing you when you answer them. Never really knowing anything or saying anything. They're a different kind of critter, that's all there is to it; they're amateurs at life. They're a failure as a sex and an outworn convention anyway. Myself, I'm for sending them to the scrapheap. Votes for men!"

And with this, according to the divagations of their temperaments and characters, the others strenuously concurred.

THEIR days, crowded to the brim with work, passed so swiftly that they scarcely noticed their flight. Their nights, filled with a sleep that was twin brother to Death, seemed not to exist at all.

Their evenings were lively with the most brilliant kind of man-talk. To it, Frank Merrill brought his encyclopedic book knowledge, his insatiable curiosity about life; Ralph Addington all the garnered richness of his acute observation; Billy Fairfax his acquaintance with the elect of the society or of the art world, his quiet, deferential attitude of listener. But the events of these conversational orgies were Honey Smith's adventures and Pete Murphy's romances.

Honey's narrative was crisp, clear, quick, straight from the shoulder, colloquial, slangy. He dealt often in the first person and the present tense. He told a plain tale from its simple beginning to its simple end. But Pete— His language had all Honey's simplicity and terseness and, in addition, he had the literary touch, both the dramatist's instinct and the fictionist's insight. His stories always ran up to a psychological climax; but this was always disguised by the best narratory tricks. He was one of those men of whom people always say "if he could only write as

he talks." In point of fact, he wrote much better than he talked—but he talked better than anyone else. The unanalytic never allowed in him for the spell of the spoken word, nor for the fiery quality of his spirit.

As time went on, their talks grew more and more confidential. Women's faces began to gleam here and there in narrative. They began to indulge in long discussions of the despised sex; at times they ran into fierce controversy. Occasionally Honey Smith re-told a story which, from the introduction of a shadowy girl-figure, became mysteriously more interesting and compelling. Once or twice they nearly went over the border-line of legitimate confidence, so intimate had their talk become—muffled as it was by the velvety, star-sown dark and interrupted only by the unheeded thunders of the surf. They were always pulling themselves up to debate openly whether they should go farther, always, on consideration, turning narrative into a channel much less confidential and much less interesting, or as openly plugging straight ahead, carefully disguising names and places.

After a week or two, the first fine careless rapture of their escape from death disappeared. The lure of loot evaporated. They did not stop their work on "shipduffie," but it became aimless and undirected. Their trip into the island seemed a little purposeless. Frank Merrill had to scourge them to patrol the beach, to keep their signal sheets flying, their signal fires burning. The effect upon their mental condition of this loss of animus was immediate. They became perceptibly more serious.

Their first camp—it consisted only of five haphazard piles of bedding—satisfied superficially the shiftless habits of their womanless group; subconsciously, however, they all fell under the depression of its discomfort and disorder. They bathed in the ocean regularly but they did not shave. Their clothes grew ragged and torn, and although there were scores of trunks packed with wearing apparel, they did not bother to change them. Subconsciously they all responded to these irregularities by a sudden change in spirit.

In the place of the gay talk-fests that filled their evenings, they began to hold long pessimistic discussions about their future on the island in case rescue were indefinitely delayed. Taciturn periods fell upon them. Frank Merrill showed only a

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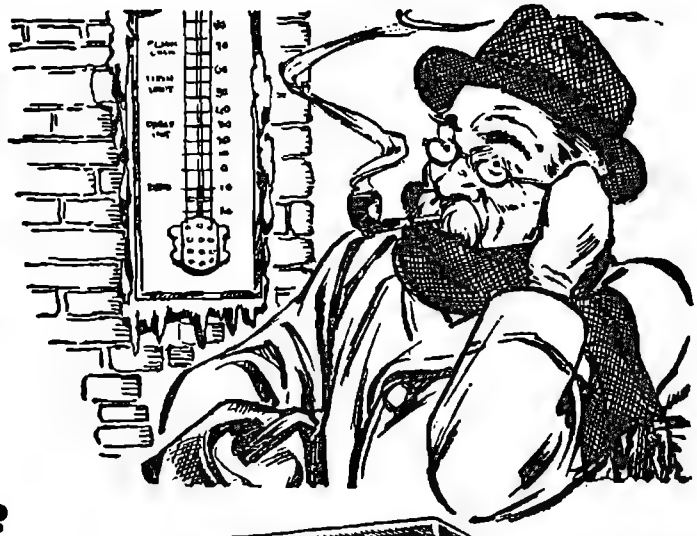

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slight seriousness. Billy Fairfax, however, wore a look permanently sobered. Pete Murphy became subject at regular intervals to wild rhapsodical seizures when he raved, almost in impromptu verse, about the beauty of sea and sky. These were followed by periods of an intense, bitter, black, Celtic melancholy. Ralph Addington degenerated into what Honey described as "the human sourball."

He spoke as seldom as possible and then only to snarl. He showed a tendency to disobey the few orders that Frank Merrill, who still held his position of leader, laid upon them. Once or twice he grazed a quarrel with Merrill. Honey Smith developed an abnormality equal to Ralph Addington's, but in the opposite direction. His spirits never flagged; he brimmed with joy-in-life, vitality, and optimism. It was as if he had some secret mental solace.

"Damn you and your sunny-side-up dope!" Ralph Addington growled at him again and again. "Shut up, will you!"

One day Frank Merrill proposed a hike across the island. Billy Fairfax who, at the head, had set a brisk pace for the file, suddenly dropped back to the rear and accosted Honey Smith who had lagged behind. Honey was skipping stones over the lake from a pocketful of flat pebbles.

"Say, Honey," Billy began. The other three men were far ahead, but Billy kept his voice low. "Do you remember that dream you had about the big bird—the time we joshed you so?"

"Sure, I do," Honey said cheerfully. "Only remember one thing, Billy. That wasn't a dream any more than this is."

"All right," Billy exclaimed. "You don't have to show me. A funny thing happened to me last night. I'm not telling the others. They won't believe it and—well, my nerves are all on end. I know I'd get mad if they began to jolly. I was sleeping like the dickens—a sure-for-certain Rip Van Winkle—when all of a sudden—did you ever have a pet cat, Honey?"

"Nope."

"Well, I've had lots of them. I like cats. I had one once that used to wake me up at two minutes past seven every morning as regularly as two minutes past seven came—not an instant before, not an instant after. He turned the trick by jumping up on the bed and looking steadily into my face. Never touched me, you understand. Well, I waked this morning just after sunrise with a feeling Kilo was there staring at me. Somebody was—" Billy paused. He swallowed rapidly and wet his lips. "But it wasn't Klo." Billy paused.

"I'm listening, bo," said Honey, shying another stone.

"It was a girl looking at me," Billy said, simply as though it were something to be expected. He paused. Then, "Get that? A *girl!* She was bending over me—pretty close—I could almost touch her. I can see her now as plainly as I see you. She was blonde. One of those pale-gold blondes with hair like honey and features cut with a chisel. You know the type. Some people think it's cold. It's a kind of beauty that's always appealed to me, though." He stopped.

"Well," Honey prodded him with a kind of noncommittal calm, "what happened?"

"Nothing. If you can believe me—*nothing*. I stared—oh, I guess I stared for a quarter of a minute—straight up into the most beautiful pair of eyes that I ever saw in my life. I stared straight *up* into them and I stared straight *down* into them. They were as deep as a well and as gray as a cloud and as cold as ice. And they had lashes—" For a moment the quiet directness of Billy's narrative was disturbed by a whiff of inner tumult. "Whew! what eyelashes! Honey, did you ever come across a lonely mountain lake with high reeds growing around the edge? You know how pure and unspoiled and virginal it seems. That was her eyes. They sort of hynotized me. My eyes closed and—when I awoke it was broad daylight. What do you think?"

"Well," said Honey judicially, "I know just how you feel. I could have killed the boys for joshing me the way they did. I was sure. I was certain I heard a woman laugh that night. And, by God, I did hear it. Whenever I contradict myself, something rises up and tells me I lie. But—" His radiant brown smile crumpled his brown face. "Of course, I *didn't* hear it. I *couldn't* have heard it. And so I guess you didn't see the peroxide you speak of. And yet if you punch me in the jaw, I'll know exactly how you feel." His face uncrumpled, smoothed itself out to his rare look of seriousness. "The point of it is that we're all a little touched in the bean. I figure that you and I are alike in some things. That's why we've always hung together. And all this queer stuff takes us two the same way. Remember that psychology dope old Rand used to pump into us at college? Well, our phychologies have got all twisted up by a recent event in nautical circles and we're seeing things that *aren't* there and not seeing things that *are* there."

"Honey," said Billy, "that's all right. But I want you to understand me and I don't want you to make any mistake. I *saw* a girl."

"And don't forget this," answered Honey. "I *heard* one."

Billy made no allusion to any of this with the other three men. But for the rest of the day, he had a return of his gentle good humor. Honey's spirits fairly sizzled.

THAT night Frank Merrill suddenly started out of sleep with a yelled, "What was that?"

"What was what?" everybody demanded, waking immediately to the panic in his voice.

"That cry," he explained breathlessly, "didn't you hear it?" Frank's eyes were brilliant with excitement; he was pale.

Nobody had heard it. And Ralph Addington and Pete Murphy, cursing lustily, turned over and promptly fell asleep again. But Billy Fairfax grew rapidly more and more awake. "What sort of a cry?" he asked. Honey Smith said nothing, but he stirred the fire into a blaze in preparation for a talk.

"The strangest cry I ever heard, long-drawn-out, wild—eerie's the word for it, I guess," Frank Merrill said. As he spoke, he peered off into the darkness. "If it were possible, I should say it was a woman's voice."

The three men walked away from the camp, looked off into every direction of the starlit night. Nowhere was there sign or sound of life.

"It must have been gulls," said Honey Smith.

"It didn't sound like gulls," answered Frank Merrill. For an instant he fell into meditation so deep that he virtually forgot the presence of the other two. "I don't know what it was," he said finally in an exasperated tone. "I'm going to sleep."

They walked back to camp. Frank Merrill rolled himself up in a blanket, lay down. Soon there came from his direction only the sound of regular, deep breathing.

"Well, Honey," Billy Fairfax asked, a note of triumph in his voice, "how about it?"

"Well, Billy," Honey Smith said in a baffled tone, "when you get the answer, give it to me."

Nobody mentioned the nights' experience the next day. But a dozen times Frank Merrill stopped his work to gaze out to sea, an expression of perplexity on his face.

The next night, however, they were all waked again, waked twice. It was Ralph Addington who spoke first; a kind of hoarse grunt and a "What the devil was that?"

"What?" the others called.

"Damned if I know," Ralph answered. "If you wouldn't think I was off my conch, I'd say it was a gang of women laughing."

Pete Murphy, who always woke in high spirits, began to joke Ralph Addington. The other three were silent. In fifteen minutes they were all asleep; in sixty, they were all awake again.

It was Pete Murphy who sounded the alarm this time. "Say, something spoke to me," he said. "Or else I'm a nut. Or else I have had the most vivid dream I've ever had." Evidently he did not believe that it was a dream. He sat up and listened; the others listened, too. There was no sound in the soft, still night, however. They talked for a little while, a strangely subdued quintette. It was as though they were all trying to comment on these experiences without saying anything about them.

They slept through the next night undisturbed until just before sunrise. Then Honey Smith woke them. It was still dark, but a fine dawn-glow had begun faintly to silver the east. "Say, you fellows," he exclaimed. "Wake up!" His voice vibrated with excitement, although he seemed to try to keep it low. "There are strange critters round here. No mistake this time. Woke with a start, feeling that something had brushed over me—saw a great bird—a gigantic thing—flying off—heard one woman's laugh—then another—"

It was significant that nobody joked Honey this time. "Say, this island'll be a nut-house if this keeps up," Pete Murphy said irritably. "Let's just go to sleep again."

"No, you don't!" said Honey. "Not one of you is going to sleep. You're all going to sit up with me until the blasted sun comes up."

People always hastened to accommodate Honey. In spite of the hour, they began to rake the fire, to prepare breakfast. The others became preoccupied gradually, but Honey still sat with his face towards the water, watching.

It grew brighter.

"It's time we started to build a camp, boys," Frank Merrill said, withdrawing momentarily from deep reflection. "We'll go crazy doing nothing all the time. We'll—"

"Great God," Honey interrupted. "Look."

Far out to sea and high in the air, birds were flying. There were five of them and they were enormous. They flew with amazing strength, swiftness, and grace; but for the most part they buzzed about a fixed area like bees at a honey pot. It was a limited area, but within it they dipped, dropped, curved, wove in and out.

"Well, I'll be—"

"They're those black spots we saw the first day, Pete," Billy Fairfax said breathlessly. "We thought it was the sun."

"That's what I heard in the night," Frank Merrill gasped to Ralph Addington.

"But what are they?" asked Honey Smith in a voice that had a falsetto note of wonder. "They laugh like a woman—take it from me."

"Eagles—buzzards—vultures—condors—rocs—phoenixes," Pete Murphy recited his list in an orgy of imaginative conjecture.

"They're some lost species—something left over from a prehistoric era," Frank Merrill explained, shaking with excitement. "No vulture or eagle or condor could be as big as that at this distance. At least I think so." He paused here, as one studying the problem in the scientific spirit. "Often in the Rockies I've confused a nearby chicken-hawk, at first, with a far eagle. But the human eye had its own system of triangulation. Those are not little birds nearby, but big birds far off. See how heavily they soar. Do you realize what's happened? We've made a discovery that will shake the whole scientific world. There, there, they're going!"

"My God, look at them beat it!" said Honey; and there was awe in his voice.

"Why, they're monster size," Frank Merrill went on, and his voice had grown almost hysterical. "They could carry one of us off. We're not safe. We must take measures at once to protect ourselves. Why, at night—we must make traps. If we can capture one, or, better, a pair, we're famous. We're a part of history now."

THEY watched the strange birds disappear over the water. For more than an hour, the men sat still, waiting for them to return. They did not come back, however. The men hung about camp all day long, talking of nothing else. Night came at last, but sleep was not in them. The dark seemed to give a fresh impulse to conversation. Conjecture battled with theory and fact jousted with fancy. But one conclusion was as futile as another.

Frank Merrill tried to make them devise some system of defense or concealment, but the others laughed at him. Talk as he would, he could not seem to convince them of their danger. Indeed, their state of mind was entirely different from his. Mentally he seemed to boil with interest and curiosity, but it was the sane, calm, open-minded excitement of the scientist. The others were alert and preoccupied in turn, but there was an element of reserve in their attitude. Their eyes kept going off into space, fixing there until their look became one brooding question. They avoided conversation. They avoided each other's gaze.

Gradually they drew off from the fire, settled themselves to rest, fell into the splendid sleep that followed their long out-of-doors days.

In the middle of the night, Billy Fairfax came out of a dream to the knowledge that somebody was shaking him gently, firmly, furtively, "Don't move!" Honey Smith's voice whispered. "Keep quiet till I wake the others."

It was a still and moon lighted world. Billy Fairfax lay quiet, his wide-open eyes fixed on the luminous sky. The sense of drowse was being brushed out of his brain as though by a mighty whirlwind, and in its place came a vague sensation of confusion, of excitement, of a miraculous abnormality. He heard Honey Smith crawl slowly from man to man, heard him whisper his adjuration once, twice, three times. "Now," Honey called finally.

The men looked seaward. Then, simultaneously, they leaped to their feet.

The semi-tropical moon was at its full. Huge, white, embossed, cut out, it did not shine—it glared from the sky. It made a melted moonstone of the atmosphere. It faded the few clouds to a sapphire-gray, just touched here and there with the chalky dot of a star. It slashed a silver trail across a sea jet-black except where the waves rimmed it with snow. Up in the white enchantment, but not far above them, the strange air-creatures were flying. They were not birds; they were winged women!

Darting, diving, glancing, curving, wheeling, they interwove in what seemed the premeditated figures of an aerial dance. If they were conscious of the group of men on the beach, they did not show it; they seemed entirely absorbed in their flying. Their wings, like enormous scimitars, caught the moonlight, flashed it back. For an interval, they played close in a group inextricably intertwined, a revolving ball

of vivid color. Then, as if seized by a common impulse, they stretched, hand in hand, in a line across the sky—drifted.

The moonlight flooded them full, caught glitter and gleam from wing-sockets, shot shimmer and sheen from wing-tips, sent cataracts of iridescent color pulsing between. Snow-silver one, brilliant green and gold another, dazzling blue the next, luminous orange a fourth, flaming flamingo scarlet the last, their colors seemed half liquid, half light. One moment the whole figure would flare into a splendid blaze, as if an inner mechanism had suddenly turned on all the electricity; the next, the blaze died down to the fairy glisten given by the moonlight.

As if by one impulse, they began finally to fly upward. Higher and higher they rose, still hand in hand. Detail of color and movement vanished. The connotation of the human thing evaporated. One instant, relaxed, they seemed tiny galleons, all sails set, that floated lazily, the sport of an aerial sea; another, supple and sinuous, they seemed monstrous fish whose fins triumphantly clove the air, monarchs of that aerial sea.

A little of this and then came another impulse. The great wings furled close like blades leaping back to scabbard; the flying-girls dropped sheer in a dizzying fall. Halfway to the ground, they stopped simultaneously as if caught by some invisible air plateau.

The great feathery fans opened—and this time the men got the whipping whirr of them—spread high, palpitated with color. From this lower level, the girls began to fall again, but gently, like dropping clouds.

Nearer they came to the petrified group on the beach, nearer and nearer. Undoubtedly they had known all the time that an audience was there; undoubtedly they had planned this; they looked down and smiled.

And now the men had every detail of them—the brown seaweeds and green seagrasses that swathed their bodies just short of heroic size, deep-bosomed, broad-waisted, long-limbed; their arms round like a woman's and strong like a man's; their hair that fell, a braid over each ear, twined with brilliant flowers and green vines. Their faces superhumanly beautiful, though elvish; the *gaminerie* in their laughing eyes, which sparkled through half-closed, thick-lashed lids, the *gaminerie* in their smiling mouths, which showed twin rows of pearl gleaming in tricksy mirth; their big, strong-looking, long-fingered hands; their slimly smooth, exquisitely shaped, too-tiny, transparent feet; their strong wrists; their stem-like, breakable ankles. Closer and closer and closer they came. And now the men could almost touch them. They paused an instant and fluttered—fluttered like a swarm of butterflies undecided where to fly. As though choosing to rest, they hovered—hovered with a gentle, slow, seductive undulation of wings, of hands, of feet.

Then another impulse took them.

They broke handclasps and up they went, like arrows straight up—up—up—up. Then they turned out to sea, streaming through the air, in line still, but one behind the other. And for the first time, sound came from them; they threw off peals of girl-laughter that fell like handfuls of diamonds. Their mirth ended in a long, eerie cry. Then straight out to the eastern horizon they went and away and off.

They were dwindling rapidly.
They were spots.
They were specks.
They were nothing.

CHAPTER II

THE WINGED ONES

SILENCE followed—profound, portentous, protracted.

Finally, Honey Smith absently stooped and picked up a pebble. He threw it over the silver ring of the flat, foam-edged, low-tide waves. It curved downward, hissed across a surface of water smooth as jade, skidded four times, and dropped.

The men strained their eyes to follow the progress of this tangible thing.

"Where do you suppose they've gone?" Honey said as unexcitably as one might inquire directions from a stranger.

"When do you suppose they'll come back?" Billy Fairfax added casually.

"Did you notice the red-headed one?" asked Pete Murphy. "My first girl had red hair. I always jump when I see a carrot-top." He made this intimate revelation simply, as if the time for a conventional reticence had passed.

"They were lookers all right," Ralph Addington went on. "I'd pick the golden blonde, the second from the right." He, too, spoke in a matter-of-fact tone, as though he were selecting a favorite from the front row in the chorus.

"It must have happened if we saw it," Frank Merrill said. There was in his voice a note of petulance, almost childish. "But we ought not to have seen it. It has no right to be. It upsets things so."

"What are we all standing up like gawks for?" Pete Murphy demanded with a sudden irritability. "Sit down!"

Everybody dropped. They all sat as they fell.

They sat motionless. They sat silent.

"The name of this place is 'Angel Island,'" announced Billy Fairfax after a long time. His tone was that of a man whose thoughts, swirling in phantasmagoria, seek anchorage in fact.

They did not sleep that night.

When Frank Merrill arose the next morning, Ralph Addington was just returning from a stroll down the beach. Ralph looked at the same time exhausted and recuperated. He was white, tense, wild-eyed, but recently aroused interior fires glowed through his skin, made up for his lost color and energy. Frank also had a different look. His eyes had kindled, his face had become noticeably more alive. But it was the fire of the intellect that had produced this frigid glow.

"Seen anything?" Frank Merrill inquired.

"Not a thing."

"You don't think they're frightened enough not to come back?"

The gleam in Ralph Addington's eye changed to flame. "I don't think they're frightened at all. They'll come back all right. There's only one thing that you can depend on in women; and that is that you can't lose them."

"I can scarcely wait to see them again," Frank exclaimed eagerly. "Addington, I can write a monograph on those flying maidens that will make the whole world gasp. This is the greatest discovery of modern times. Man alive, don't you itch to get to paper and pencil?"

"Not so—I've noticed it," Ralph replied with contemptuous emphasis. "I shall lie awake nights, just the same, though."

"Say, fellers, we didn't dream that, did we?" Billy Fairfax called suddenly, rolling out of the sleep that had followed their all night talk.

"Well, I reckon if it wasn't for the other four, no one of us would trust his own senses," Frank Merrill said dryly.

"If you'd listened to me in the beginning," Honey Smith remarked in a drowsy voice, not bothering to open his eyes, "I wouldn't be the I-told-you-so kid now."

"Well, if you'd listened to me and Pete!" said Billy Fairfax; "didn't we think, way back there that first day, that our lamps were on the blink because we saw black spots? Great Scott, what dreams I've had," he went on, "a mixture of 'Arabian Nights', 'Gulliver's Travels,' 'Peter Wilkins,' 'Peter Pan,' 'Goosie,' Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, and every dime novel I've ever read. Do you suppose they'll come back?"

"I've just talked that over with Ralph," Frank Merrill answered him. "If we've frightened them away forever, it will be a terrible loss to science."

Ralph Addington emitted one of his cackling, ironic laughs. "I guess I'm not worrying as much about science as I might. But as to their coming back—why, it stands to reason that they'll have just as much curiosity about us as we have about them. Curiosity's a woman's strong point, you know. Oh, they'll come back all right! The only question is, how soon?"

"It made me dream of music—of *Siegfried.*" It was Pete Murphy who spoke and he seemed to plump from sleep straight into the conversation. "What a theme for grand opera. Women with wings! Flying girls!"

"How long is it going to take us to get acquainted with these angels?" asked Honey Smith.

"Not any longer than usual," said Ralph Addington with an expressive wink. "Leave that to me. I'm going now to see what I can see." He walked rapidly down the beach, scaled the southern reef, and stood there studying the horizon.

The others remained sitting on the sand. For a while they watched Ralph. Then they talked the whole thing over with as much interest as if they had not yet discussed it. Ralph rejoined them and they went through it again. It was as though by some miracle of mind-transference, they had all dreamed the same dream; as though, by some miracle of sight-transference they had all seen the same vision; as though, by some miracle of space-transference, they had all stepped into the fourth dimension.

Their comment was ever of the wonder of their strange adventure, the beauty, the thrill, the romance of it. It had brought out in them every instinct of chivalry and kindness, it had developed in them every tendency toward high-mindedness and idealism. Angel Island would be an Atlantis, an Eden, an Arden, an Arcadia, a Utopia, a Milleamours, a Paradise, the Garden of Hesperides. Into it the golden age would come again. They drew

glowing pictures of the wonderful friendships that would grow up on Angel Island between them and their beautiful visitors.

These poetic considerations gave way finally to a discussion of ways and means. They agreed that they must get to work at once on some sort of shelter for their guests, in case the weather should turn bad. They even discussed at length the best methods of teaching the English language. They talked the whole morning, going over the same things again and again, questioning each other eagerly without listening for an answer, interrupting ruthlessly, and then adding nothing.

THE day passed without event. At the slightest sound they all jumped. Their sleeplessness was beginning to tell on them and their nerves were still obsessed by the unnaturalness of their experience. It was a long time before they quieted down, but the night passed without interruption. So did the next day. Another day went by and another, and another, and during this time they did little but sit and talk.

"See here, boys," Ralph Addington said one morning. "I say we get together and build some cabins. There's no calculating how long this grand weather'll keep up. The first thing we know we'll be up against a rainy season. Isn't that right, Professor?"

On most practical matters Ralph treated Frank Merrill's opinion with a contempt that was offensively obvious to the others. In questions of theory or of abtruse information, he was foolishly deferential. At those times, he always gave Frank his title of Professor.

"I hardly think so," Frank Merrill answered. "I think we'll have an equable, semi-tropical climate all the year round—about like Honolulu."

"Well, anyway," Ralph Addington went on, "it's barbarous, living like this. And we want to be prepared for anything." His gaze left Frank Merrill's face and traveled with a growing significance to each of the other three. *"Anything,"* he repeated with emphasis. "We've got enough truck here to make a young Buckingham Palace. And we'll go mad sitting round waiting for those air-queens to pay us a visit. How about it?"

"It's an excellent idea," Frank Merrill said heartily. "I have been on the point of proposing it many times myself."

However, they seemd unable to pull themselves together; they did nothing that day. But the next morning, urged back to work by the harrying monotony of waiting, they began to clear a space among the trees close to the beach. Two of them had a little practical building knowledge: Ralph Addington who had roughed it in many strange countries; Billy Fairfax who, in the San Francisco earthquake, had on a wager built himself a house. They worked with all their initial energy. They worked with the impetus that comes from capable supervision. And they worked as if under the impulse of some unformulated motive.

As usual, Honey Smith bubbled with spirits. Billy Fairfax and Pete Murphy hardly spoke, so close was their concentration. Ralph Addington worked longer and harder than anybody, and even Honey was now more gay; he whistled and sang constantly. Frank Merrill showed no real interest in these proceedings. He did his fair share of the work, but obviously without a driving motive. He had reverted utterly to type. He spent his leisure writing a monograph. When inspiration ran low, he occupied himself doctoring books. Eternally, he hunted for the flat stones between which he pressed their swollen bulks

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back to shape. Eternally he puttered about, mending and patching them. He used to sit for hours at a desk which he had rescued from the ship's furniture. The others never became accustomed to the comic incongruity of this picture—especially when, later, he virtually boxed himself in with a trio of book-cases.

"Wouldn't you think he was sitting in an office?" Ralph Addington said.

"Curious about Merrill," Honey Smith answered, indulging in one of his sudden, off-hand characterizations, bull's-eye shots every one of them. "He's a good man, ruined by culturine. He's the bucko-mate type translated into the language of the academic world. Three centuries ago he'd have been a Drake or a Frobisher. And today, even, if he'd followed the lead of his real ability, he'd have made a great financier, a captain of industry or a party boss.

"But you see, he was brought up to think that book-education was the whole cheese. The only ambition he knows is to make good in the university world. How I hated that college atmosphere and its insistence on culture! That was what riled me most about it. As a general thing, I detest a professor. Can't help liking old Frank, though."

The four men virtually took no time off from work; or at least the change of work that stood for leisure was all in the line of home-making. Eternally, they teased each other about these womanish occupations; but they all kept steadily to it. Ralph Addington and Honey Smith put the furniture into shape, repairing and polishing it. Billy Fairfax sorted out the glass, china, tools, household utensils of every kind.

Pete Murphy went through the trunks with his art side uppermost. He collected all kinds of Oriental bric-à-brac, pictures and draperies. He actually mended and pressed things; he had all the artist's capability in these various feminine lines. When the others ribbed him about his exotic and impracticable tastes, he said that, before he left, he intended to establish a museum of fine arts on Angel Island.

Hard as the men worked, they had always the appearance of those who await the expected. But the expected did not occur; and gradually the sharp edge of anticipation wore dull. Emotionally they calmed. The sudden whirr of a bird's condition. The sudden whirr of a bird's flight attracted only a casual glance. In Ralph Addington alone, expectation maintained itself at the boiling point. He trained himself to work with one eye searching the horizon. One afternoon, when they had scattered for a siesta, his hoarse cry brought them running to the beach from all directions.

So suddenly had the girls appeared that they might have materialized from the air. This time they had not come from the sea. When Ralph discovered them, they were hovering back of them above the trees that banded the beach. The sun was setting, blood-red; the whole western sky had broken away. The girls seemed to be floating in a sea of crimson-amber ether. Its light brought lustre to every feather; it turned the edges of their wings to flame; it changed their smoothly piled hair to helmets of burnished metal.

THE men tore from the beach to the trees at full speed. For a moment the violence of this action threw the girls into a panic. They fluttered, broke lines, flew high, circled. And all the time, they uttered shrill cries of distress.

"They're frightened," Billy Fairfax said. "Keep quiet, boys."

The men stopped running, stood stock-still.

Gradually the girls calmed, sank, took up the inter-weaving figures of their air dance. If at their first appearance they seemed creatures of the sea, this time they were as distinctively of the forest. They looked like spirits of the trees over which they hovered. Indeed, but for their wings they might have been dryads. Wreaths of green encircled their heads and waists. Long leafy streamers trailed from their shoulders. Often in the course of their aerial play, they plunged down into the feathery tree-tops.

Once, the blonde with the blue wings sailed out of the group and balanced herself for a toppling second on a long, outstretching bough.

"Good Lord, what a picture!" Pete Murphy said.

As if she understood, she repeated her performance. She cast a glance over her shoulder at them—unmistakably noting the effect.

"Hates herself, doesn't she?" commented Honey Smith. "They're talking!" he added after an interval of silence. "Some one of them is giving directions—I can tell by the tone of her voice. Can't make out which one it is, though. Thank God, they can talk!"

"It's the quiet one—the blonde—the one with the white wings," Billy Fairfax explained. "She's captain. Some bean on her, too; she straightened them out a moment ago when they got so frightened."

"I now officially file my claim," said Ralph Addington, "to that peachy one—the golden blonde—the one with the blue wings, the one who tried to stand on the bough. That girl's a corker. I can tell her kind of pirate craft as far as I see it."

"Me for the thin one!" said Pete Murphy. "She's a pippin, if you please. Quick as a cat! Graceful as they make them. And look at that mop of red hair! Isn't that a holocaust? I bet she's a shrew."

"You win, all right," agreed Ralph Addington. "I'd like nothing better than the job of taming her, too."

"See here, Ralph," bantered Pete, "I've copped Bricktop for myself. You keep off the grass. See!"

"All right," Ralph answered. "Katherine for yours, Petruchio. The golden blonde for mine!" He smiled for the first time in days. In fact, at sight of the flying girls he had begun to beam with fatuous good nature.

"Two blondes, two brunettes, and a redtop," said Honey Smith, summing them up practically. "One of those brunettes, the brown one, must be a Kanaka. The other's prettier—she looks like a Spanish woman. There's something rather taking about the plain one, though. Pretty snappy— if anybody should fly up in a plane and ask you!"

"It's curious," Frank Merrill said with his most academic manner, "it has not yet occurred to me to consider those young women from the point of view of their physical pulchritude. I'm interested only in their ability to fly. The one with the silver-white wings, the one Billy calls the 'quiet one,' flies better than any of the others. The dark one on the end, the one who looks like a Spaniard, flies least well. It is rather disturbing, but I can think of them only as birds. I have to keep recalling to myself that they're women. I can't realize it."

"Well, don't worry," Ralph Addington said with the contemptuous accent with which latterly he answered all Frank Merrill's remarks. "You will."

The others laughed, but Frank turned on them a look of severe reproof.

"Oh, hell!" Honey Smith exclaimed in a regretful tone; "they're beating it again. I say, girls," he called at the top of his lungs, "don't go! Stay a little longer and we'll buy you a dinner and a taxicab."

Apparently the flying girls realized that he was addressing them. For a hair's breadth of a second they paused. Then, with a speed that had a suggestion of panic in it, they flew out to sea. And again a flood of girl-laughter fell in bubbles upon them.

"They distrust muh!" Honey commented. But he smiled with the indolent amusement of the man who has always held the master-hand with women.

"Must have come from the east, this time," he said as they filed soberly back to camp. "But where in thunder do they start from?"

They had, of course, discussed this question as they had discussed a hundred other obvious ones. "I'm wondering now," Frank Merrill answered, "if there are islands both to the east and the west. But, after all, I'm more interested to know if there are any more of these winged women, and if there are any males."

Again they talked far into the night. And as before their comment was of the wonder, the romance, the poetry of their strange situation. And again they drew imaginary pictures of what Honey Smith called "the young Golden Age" that they would soon institute on Angel Island.

"Say," Honey remarked facetiously when at length they started to run down, "what happens to a man if he marries an angel? Does he become angel-consort or one of those seraphim arrangements?"

Ralph Addington laughed. But Billy Fairfax and Pete Murphy frowned. Frank Merrill did not seem to hear him. He was taking notes by the firelight.

The men continued to work at the high rate of speed that, since the appearance of the women, they had set for themselves. But whatever form their labor took, their talk was ever of the flying girls. They referred to them individually now as the "dark one," the "plain one", the "thin one," the "quiet one," and the "peachy one." They theorized eternally about them. It was a long time, however, before they saw them again, so long that they had begun to get impatient.

In Ralph Addington this uneasiness took the form of irritation. "If I'd had a gun," he snarled more than once, "by the Lord Harry, I'd have winged one of them." He sat far into the night and waited. He arose early in the morning and watched. He went for long, slow, solitary, silent, prowling hikes into the interior. His eyes

began to look strained from so minute a study of the horizon line. He grew haggard. His attitude in the matter annoyed Pete Murphy, who maintained that he had no right to spy on women.

Argument broke out between them, waxing hot, waned to silence, broke out again and with increased fury. Frank Merrill and Billy Fairfax listened to all this, occasionally smoothing things over between the disputants. But Honey Smith, who seemed more amused than bothered, deftly fed the flames of controversy by agreeing first with one and then with the other.

LATE one afternoon, just as the evening star flashed the signal of twilight, the girls came streaming over the sea toward the island.

At the first far-away glimpse, the men dropped their tools and ran to the water's edge. Honey Smith waded out, waist-deep.

"Well, what do you know about that?" he called out. "Pipe the formation!"

They came massed vertically. In the distance they might have been a rainbow torn from its moorings, borne violently forward on a high wind. The rainbow broke in spots, fluttered, and then came together again. It vibrated with color. It pulsed with iridescence.

"How the thunder—" Addington began, and stopped. "Well, can you beat it?" he concluded.

The human column was so arranged that the wings of one of the air-girls concealed the body of another just above her.

The "dark one" led, flying low, her scarlet pinions beating slowly back and forth about her head.

Just above, near enough for her body to be concealed by the scarlet wings of the "dark one," but high enough for her pointed brown face to peer between their curves, came the "plain one."

Higher flew the "thin one." Her body was entirely covered by the orange wings of the "plain one," but her copper-colored hair made a gleamy spot in their vase-shaped opening.

Still higher appeared the "peachy one." She seemed to be holding her lustrous blond head carefully centered in the oval between the "thin one's" green-and-yellow plumage. She looked like a portrait in a frame.

Highest of them all, floating upright, a Winged Victory of the air, her silver wings towering straight above her head, the cameo face of the "quiet one" looked levelly into the distance.

Their wings moved in rotation, and with machinelike regularity. First one pair flashed up, swept back and down, then another and another. As they neared, the color seemed the least wonderful detail of the picture. For it changed in effect from a column of glittering wings to a column of girl-faces, a column that floated light as a thistle-down, a column that divided, parted, opened, closed again.

The background of all this was a veil of dark gauze at the horizon line, its foil a golden, virgin moon, dangling a single brilliant star.

"They're talking!" Honey Smith exclaimed. "And they're leaving!"

The girls did not pause once. They flew in a straight line over the island to the west, always maintaining their columnar formation. At first the men thought that they were making for the trees. They ran after them. The speed of their running had no effect this time on their visitors, who continued to sail eastward. The men called on them to stay. They called repeatedly, singly and in chorus. They called in every tone of humble masculine entreaty and of arrogant masculine command. But their cries might have fallen on marble ears. The girls neither turned nor paused. They disappeared.

"Females are certainly alike under their skins, whether they're angels or Hottentots," Ralph Addington commented. "That tableau appearance was all cooked up for us. They must have practised it for hours."

"It has the rose-carnival at Tetaluma, Cal., faded," remarked Honey Smith.

"The 'quiet one' was giving the orders for that wing movement," said Billy Fairfax. "She whispered them, but I heard her. She engineered the whole thing. She sems to be their leader."

"I got their voices this time," said Pete Murphy. "Beautiful, all of them. Soprano, high and clear. They've got a language, all right, too. What did you think of it, Frank?"

"Most interesting," replied Frank Merrill; "*most* interesting. A preponderance of consonants. Never guttural in effect, and as you say, beautiful voices, very high and clear."

"I don't see why they don't stop and play," complained Honey. His tone was the petulant one of a spoiled child. It is likely that during the whole course of his

woman-petted existence, he had never been so completely ignored. "If I only knew their lingo, I could convince them in about five minutes that we wouldn't hurt them."

"If we could only signal," said Billy Fairfax, "that if they'd only come down to earth, we wouldn't go any nearer than they wanted. But the deuce of it is proving to them that we don't bite."

"I am convinced," Frank Merrill said meditatively, "we must go about winning their confidence with the utmost care. One false step might be fatal. I know what your impatience is, though—for I can hardly school myself to wait—that extraordinary phenomenon of the wings interests me so much. The great question in my mind is their position biologically and sociologically."

"The only thing that bothers me," Honey contributed solemnly, "is whether or not they're our social equals."

Even Frank Merrill laughed. "I mean, are they birds," he went on still in a puzzled tone, "free creatures of the air, or women, bound creatures of the earth? And what should be our attitude toward them? Have we the right to capture them as ornithological specimens, or is it our duty to respect their liberty as independent human beings?"

"THEY'RE neither birds nor women," Pete Murphy burst out impetuously. "They're angels. Our duty is to fall down and worship them."

"They're women," said Billy Fairfax earnestly. "Our duty is to cherish and protect them."

"They're girls," Honey insisted jovially, "our duty is to josh and jolly them, to buy them taxicabs, theater tickets, expensive suppers, candy, and flowers."

"They're females," said Ralph Addington contemptuously. "Our duty is to tame, subjugate, infatuate, and control them."

Frank Merrill listened to each with the look on his face, half perplexity, half irritation, which always came when the conversation took a humorous turn. "I am myself inclined to look upon them as an entirely new race of beings, requiring new laws," he said thoughtfully.

Although the quick appearance and the quick departure of the girls had upset the men temporarily, they went back to work at once. And as though inspired by their appearance, they worked like tigers. As before, they talked constantly of them, piling mountains of conjecture on molehills of fact. But now their talk was less of the wonder and the romance of the situation and more of the irritation of it. Ralph Addington's unease seemed to have infected them all.

Frank Merrill had actually to coax them to keep at their duty of patrolling the beach. They were constantly studying the horizon for a glimpse of their strange visitors. Every morning they said, "I hope they'll come today."

But in point of fact, the next visit of the flying girls came in the evening.

It had been damp and dull all day. A high fog was gradually melting out of the air. Back of it a misty moon, more mature now, gleamed like a flask of honey in a golden veil. A few stars glimmered, placid, pale, and big. Suddenly between fog and earth—and they seemed to emerge from the mist like dreams from sleep—appeared the five dazzling girl-figures.

The fog had blurred the vividness of their plumage. The color no longer throbbed from wing-sockets to wing-tips; light no longer pulsated there. But great beads of fog-dew outlined the long curves of the wings, accentuated the long curves of the body. Hair, brows, lashes glittered

as if threaded with diamonds. Their cheeks and lips actually glowed, luscious as ripe fruit.

"My God!" groaned Pete Murphy; "how beautiful and inaccessible! But women should be inaccessible," he ended with a sigh.

"Not so inaccessible as they were, though," Ralph Addington said. Again the appearance of the women had transformed him physically and mentally. He moved with the nervous activity of a man strung on wires. His brown eyes showed yellow gleams like a cat's. "They're flying lower and slower tonight."

It did seem as though the fog, light as it was, definitely impeded their wings. It gave to their movements a little languor that had a plantive appealing quality. Perhaps they realized this themselves. In the midst of their aerial evolutions suddenly—and apparently without cause—they developed panic, turned seaward. Their audience, taken by surprise, burst into shouts of remonstrance, ran after them. The clamor and the motion seemed only to add to the girl's alarm. Their retreating speed was almost frenzied.

"What the—what's frightened them?" Honey Smith asked. Honey's brows had come together in an unaccustomed scowl. He bit his lips.

"Give it up," Billy Fairfax answered, and his tone boiled with exasperation. "I hope they haven't been frightened away for good."

"I think every time it's the last," exclaimed Pete Murphy, "but they keep coming back."

"Son," said Ralph Addington, and there was a perceptible element of patronage in his tone, "I'll tell you the exact order of events. It threw a scare into the girls tonight that they couldn't fly so well. But in an hour's time they'll be sore because they didn't put up a good exhibition. Now, if I know anything at all about women—and maybe I flatter myself, but I think I know a lot—they'll be back the first thing to-morrow to prove to us that their bad flying was not our effect on them but the weather's."

Whether Ralph's theory was correct could not, of course, be ascertained. But in the matter of prophecy, he was absolutely vindicated. About halfway through the morning five black spots appeared in the west. They grew gradually to bewildering shapes and colors, for the girls came dressed in gowns woven of brilliant flowers. And the torrents of their hair floated loose. This time they held themselves grouped close; they kept themselves aloof, high. But again came the sinuous interplay of flower-clad bodies, the flashing evolution of rainbow wings, the dazzling interweaving of snowy arms and legs. It held the men breathless.

"They're like goldfish in a bowl," Billy Fairfax said. "I never saw such suppleness. You wouldn't think they had a bone in their systems."

"I bet they're as strong as tigers, though," commented Addington. "I wouldn't want to handle more than one of them at once."

"I think I could handle two," remarked Frank Merrill. He said this, not boastfully, but as one who states an interesting fact. And he spoke as impersonally as though the girls were machines.

Ralph Addington studied Frank Merrill's gigantic copper-colored bulk enviously. "I guess you could," he agreed.

"Fortunately," Frank went on, "it would be impossible for such a situation to arise. Men don't war on women."

"On the contrary," Ralph disagreed, "men always war on women, and women on men. Why, Merrill," he added with his inevitable tone of patronage, "aren't you wise to the fact that the war between the sexes is in reality more bitter and bloody than any war between the races?"

But Frank did not answer. He only stared.

"Did you notice," Pete Murphy asked, "what wonderful hair they had? Loose like that—they looked more than ever like Valkyries."

"Yes, I got that," Ralph answered. He smiled until all his white teeth showed. "And take it from me, that's a point gained. When a woman begins to let her hair down, she's interested."

"Well," said Honey Smith, "their game may be the same as every other woman's you've known, but it takes a damned long time to come down to cases. What I want to know is how many months more will have to pass before we speak when we pass by."

"That matter'll take care of itself," Ralph reassured him. "You leave it to natural selection."

"Well, it's a deuce of a slow process," Honey grumbled.

WHAT hitherto had been devotion to their work grew almost to mania. It increased their interest that the little settlement of five cabins was fast taking

shape. The men slept in beds now; for they had furnished their rooms. They had begun to decorate the walls. They reopened the trunks and made another careful division of spoils. They were even experimenting with razors and quarreling amicably over their merits. At night, when their work was done, they actually changed their clothes.

"One week more of this," commented Honey Smith, "and we'll be serving meals in courses. I hope that our lady friends will call some time when we're dressed for dinner. I've tried several flossy effects in ties without results. But I expect to lay them out cold with these riding boots."

Nevertheless many days passed and the flying girls continued not to appear.

"I don't believe they're ever coming again," Pete Murphy said one day in a tone of despair.

"Oh, they'll come," Ralph Addington insisted. "They think themselves that they're not coming again, after having proved to us that they would fly just as well as ever. But they'll appear sometime when we least expect it. There's something pulling them over here that's stronger than anything they've ever come up against. They don't know what it is, but we do—Mr. G. Bernard Shaw's life force. They haven't realized yet what put the spoke in their wheel, but it will bring them here in the end."

But days and days went by. The men worked hard, in the main good-naturedly, but with occasional outbreaks of discontent and irritation. "How about that proposition of the life force?" they asked Ralph Addington again and again. "You wait!" was all he ever answered.

One day, Honey Smith, who had gone off for a solitary walk, came running back to the camp. "What do you think?" he burst out when he got within earshot. "I've seen one of them, the little brunette, the one with the orange wings, the 'plain one'. She was flying on the other side of the island all by her lonesome. She saw me first, and as sure as I stand here, she called to me—a regular bird call. I whistled and she came flying over in my direction. Blamed if she didn't keep right over my head for the whole trip."

"Low?" Ralph questioned eagerly.

"Yes," Honey answered succinctly, "but not low enough. I couldn't touch her, of course. If I stopped for a while and kept quiet as the dead, she'd come much closer. But the instant I made a move toward her—bing!—she hit the welkin.

"But the way she stared! And, Lord, how easy scared! Once I waved my handkerchief—she nearly threw a fit. Strangest sensation I've ever had in my life, to be walking calmly along like that with a girl beside me—*flying*. She isn't so plain when you get close—she does look like a Kanaka, though." He stopped and burst out laughing. "Funny thing! I kept calling her *Lulu*. After a while, she got it that that was her tag. She didn't exactly come closer when I said 'Lulu,' but she'd turn her head over her shoulder and look at me."

"Well, damn you and your good looks!" said Ralph. There was real chagrin behind the amusement in his voice.

"Did you notice the muscular development of her back and shoulders?" Frank Merrill asked eagerly.

"No," said Honey regretfully, "I don't seem to remember anything but her face."

The next morning when they were working, Pete Murphy suddenly yelled in an excited voice, "Here comes one of them!"

Everybody turned. There, heading straight toward them, an unbelievable orange patch sailing through the blue sky, flew the "plain one."

"Lulu! Lulu! Here I am, Lulu," Honey called in his most coaxing tone and with his most radiant smile. Lulu did not descend, but, involuntarily it seemed, she turned her course a little nearer to Honey. She fluttered an instant over his head, then flew straight as an arrow eastward.

"She's a looker, all right, all right," Ralph Addington said, gazing as long as she was in sight. "I guess I'll trade my blonde for your brunette, Honey."

"I bet you won't," answered Honey. "I've got Lulu half-tamed. She'll be eating out of my hand in another week."

They found this incident exciting enough to justify them in laying off from work the rest of the afternoon. But they had to get accustomed to it in the week that followed. Thereafter, some time during the day, the cry would ring out, "Here's your girl, Honey!" And Honey, not even dropping his tools, would smile over his shoulder at the approaching Lulu.

AS TIME went by, she ventured nearer and nearer, stayed longer and longer. Honey, calmly driving nails, addressed to her an endless, chaffing monologue. At first, it was apparent she was as much repelled by the tools as she was fascinated by Honey. For him to throw a nail to the ground was the signal for her to speed to

the zenith. But gradually, in spite of the noise they made, she came to accept them as dumb, inanimate, harmless. And one day, when Honey, working on the roof, dropped a screw-driver, she flew down, picked it up, flew back, and placed it within reach of his hand.

She would hover over him for hours, helping in many ways. This only, however, when the other men were sufficiently far away and only when Honey's two hands were occupied. If any one of them—Honey and the rest—made the most casual of accidental moves in her direction, her flight was that of an arrow. But nobody could have been more careful than they not to frighten her.

They always stopped, however, to watch her approach and her departure. There was something irresistibly feminine about Lulu's flight. She herself seemed to appreciate this. If anybody looked at her, she exhibited her accomplishments with an eagerness that had a charming touch of naïveté. She dipped and dove endlessly. She dealt in little darts and rushes, bird-like in their speed and grace. She never flew high, but, on her level, her activity was marvelous.

"The supermanning little imp!" Pete Murphy said again and again. "The vain little devil," Ralph Addington would add, chuckling.

"How the thunder did we ever start to call her the 'plain one'?" Honey was always asking in an injured tone.

Lulu was far from plain. She was, however, one of those girls who start by being "ugly" or "queer-looking," or downright "homely," and end by becoming "interesting" or "picturesque" or "fascinating," according to the divagations of the individual vocabulary. At first sight, you might have called her gipsy, Indian, Kanaka, Chinese, Japanese, Korean—any exotic type that you had not seen. Which is to say that she had the look of the primitive woman and the foreign woman.

Superficially, her beauty of irregularity was of all beauty the most perturbing and provocative. Eyes, skin, hair, she was all copper-browns and crimson-bronzes, all the high gloss of satiny surfaces. Every shape and contour was a variant from the regular. Her eyes took a bewildering slant. Her face showed a little piquant stress on the cheekbones. Her hair banded in a long, solid, club-like braid. In repose she bore a look a little sullen, a little heavy. When she smiled, it seemed as if her whole faced waked up; but it was only the glitter of white teeth in the slit of her scarlet mouth.

Lulu always dressed in browns and greens; leaves, mosses, grasses made a dim-colored, velvety fabric that contrasted richly with her coppery satin surfaces and her brilliant orange wings.

The excitement of this had hardly died down when Frank Merrill brought the tale of another adventure to camp. He had fallen into the habit of withdrawing late in the afternoon to one of the reefs, far enough away to read and to write quietly. One day, just as he had gone deep into his book, a shadow fell across it. Startled, he looked up.

Directly over his head, pasted on the sky like a scarlet V, hovered the "dark one." After this first instant of surprise and a second interval of perplexity, he put his book down, settled himself back quietly, and watched. Conscious of his espionage, apparently, she flew away, floated, flew back, floated, flew up, flew down, floated—always within a little distance. After half an hour of this aerial irresolution, she sailed off. She repeated her performance the next afternoon and the next, and the next, staying longer each time. By the end of the week she was spending whole afternoons there. She, too, became a regular visitor.

She never spoke. And she scarcely moved. She waved her great scarlet wings only fast enough to hold herself beyond Frank's reach. But from that distance she watched his movements, watched closely and unceasingly, watched with the interest of a child at a moving-picture show. Her surveillance was so intense, it seemed impossible that she could see anything else. But if one of the other four men started to join them, she became a flash of scarlet lightning that tore the distance.

Frank, of course, found this interesting. Every day he made voluminous notes of his observations. Every night he embodied these notes in his monograph.

"What does she look like close to?" the others asked him again and again.

"Really, I've hardly had a chance to notice yet," was Frank's invariable answer. "She's a comely young person, I should say, and, as you can easily see, of the brunette coloring. I'm so much more interested in her flying than in her appearance that I've never really taken a good look at her. Unfortunately she flies less well than the others. I wish I could get a chance to study all of them—the 'quiet one' in particular; she flies so much

faster. On the other hand, this one seems able to hold herself motionless in the air longer than they."

"She's lazy," Honey Smith said decisively. "I got that right off. She looks like a Spanish woman and she is a good deal like one in her ways."

Honey was right; the "dark one" was lazy. Alone, she always flew low, and at no time, even in company, did she dare great altitudes. She seemed to love to float, wings outspread and eyes half closed, on one of those tranquil air-plateaux that lie between drifting air currents.

She was an adept, apparently, at finding the little nodule of quiet space that forms the center of every windstorm. Standing upright in it, flaming wings erect, she would whirl through space like an autumn leaf. Gradually, she became less suspicious of the other men. She often passed in their direction on the way to her afternoon vigil with Frank.

"She certainly is one peach of a female," said Ralph Addington. "I don't know but what she's prettier than my blonde. Too bad she's stuck on that stiff of a Merrill. I suppose he'd sit there every afternoon for a year and just look at her."

"I should think she came from Andalusia," Honey answered, watching the long, low sweep of her scarlet flight. "She's got to have a Spanish name. Say we call her Chiquita."

And Chiquita she became.

Chiquita was beautiful. Her beauty had a highwayman quality of violence; it struck quick and full in the face. She was the darkest of all the girls, a raven black. As Lulu was all coppery shine and shimmer, all satiny gloss and gleam, so Chiquita was all dusk in the coloring, all velvet in the surfaces.

Her great heavy-lidded eyes were dusk and velvet, with depth on depth of an unmeaning dreaminess. Her hair, brows, lashes were dusk and velvet; and there was no light in them. Her skin, a dusky cream on which velvety shade accented velvety shadow, was colorless except where her lips, cupped like a flower, offered a splash of crimson.

Yet, in spite of the violence of her beauty, her expression held a tropical languor. Indeed, had not her flying compelled a superficial vigor from her, she would have seemed voluptuous.

Chiquita wore scarlet always, the exact scarlet of her wings, a clinging mass of tropical bloom; huge star-shaped or lily-like flowers whose brilliant lustre accentuated her dusky coloring.

THEY had no sooner accustomed themselves to the incongruity of Frank Merrill's conquest of this big, gorgeous creature than Pete Murphy developed what Honey called "a case." It was scarcely a question of development; for with Pete it had been the "thin one" from the beginning. Following an inexplicable masculine vagary, he christened her Clara—and Clara she ultimately became. Among themselves, the men employed other names for her; with them she was not so popular as with Pete. To Ralph she was "the cat"; to Billy, "the poser"; to Honey, "Carrots."

Clara appeared first with Lulu. She did not stay long on her initial visit. But afterward she always accompanied her friend, always stayed as late as she.

"I'd pick those two for running-mates anywhere," Ralph said in private to Honey. "I wish I had a dollar bill for every time I've met up with that combination, one simple, devoted, self-sacrificing, the other selfish, calculating, catty."

Clara was not exactly beautiful, although she had many points of beauty. Her straight red hair clung to her head like a

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close-fitting helmet of copper. Her skin balanced delicately between a brown pallor and a golden sallowness. Her long, black lashes paled her gray eyes slightly; her snub nose made charming havoc of what, without it, would have been a conventional regularity of profile.

She was really no more slender than the normal woman, but, compared with her mates, she seemed of elfin slimness; she was shapely in a supple, long-limbed way. There was something a little exotic about her. Her green and gold plumage gave her a touch of the fantastic and the bizarre. Prevailingly, she arrayed herself in flowers that ran all the shades from cream and lemon to yellow and orange. She was like a parrot among more uniformly feathered birds.

Clara never flew high. It was apparent, however, that if she made a tremendous effort, she could take any height. On the other hand, she flew more swiftly than either Lulu or Chiquita. She seemed to keep by preference to the middle altitudes. She hated wind and fog; she appeared only in calm and dry weather. Perhaps this was because the wind interfered with her histrionics, the fog with the wavy complications of her red hair. For she postured as she moved; whatever her hurry, she presented a picture, absolutely composed. And her hair was always intricately arranged, always decked with leaves and flowers.

"By jiminy, I'd make my everlasting fortune off you," Honey Smith once addressed her, as she flew over his head, "selling you to the moving-picture people."

Wings straight up, legs straight out, arms straight ahead, delicately slender feet, and strong-looking hands dropping like flowers, her only answer to this remark was an enigmatic closing of her thick-lashed lids, a twist into a pose even more sensuously beautiful.

"Say, I'm tired waiting," Ralph Addington growled one day, when the lovely trio flew over his head in a group. "Why doesn't that blonde of mine put in an appearance? Oh, Clara, Lulu, Chiquita," he called; "won't you bring your peachy friend the next time you call?"

It was a long time, however, before the "peachy one" appeared. Then suddenly one day a great jagged shadow enveloped them in its purple coolneess. The men looked up, startled. She must have come upon them slowly and quietly, for she was close. Her mischievous face smiled alluringly down at them from the wide triangle of her blue wings.

Followed an exhibition of flying which outdid all the others.

Dropping like a star from the zenith and dropping so close and so swiftly that the men involuntarily scattered to give her landing-room, she caught herself up within two feet of their heads and bounded straight up to the zenith again. Up she went, and up and up until she was only a blue shimmer; and up and up until she was only a dark dot. Then, without warning, again she dropped, gradually this time, head-foremost like a diver, down and down and down until her body was perfectly outlined, down and down and down until she floated just above their heads.

Coming thus slowly upon them, she gave, for the first time, a close view of her wonderful blondness. It was a sheer golden blondness, not a hint of tow, or flaxen, or yellow; not a touch of silver, or honey, or auburn. It was half her charm that the extraordinary strength and vigor of her contours contrasted with the delicacy and dewiness of her coloring, that from one aspect, she seemed as frail as a flower, from another as hard as a crystal. She had, at the same time, the untouched, unstained beauty of a young boy.

Her skin, white as a lily-petal and as thick and smooth, had been deepened by a single drop of amber to cream. Her eyes, of which the sculpturesque lids drooped a little, flashed a blue as limpid as the sky. Teeth, set as close as seed-pearls, gleamed between lips which were the pink of the faded rose. The sunlight turned her golden hair to spun glass, melted it to light itself. The shadow thickened it to fluid, hardened it to massy gold again. The details of her face came out only as the result of determined study. Her chief beauty—and it amounted to witchery, to enchantment—lay in a constant and a constantly subtle change of expression.

DURING this exhibition the men stood frozen in the exact attitudes in which she found them. Ralph Addington alone remained master of himself. He stood quietly, every nerve tense, every muscle alert, the expression on his face that of a cat watching a bird. At her second dip downward, he suddenly jumped into the air, jumped so high that his clutching fingers grazed her finger-tips.

That frightened her.

Her upward flight was of a terrific speed—she leaped into the sky. But once beyond the danger-line her composure came back. She dropped on them a coil of laughter,

Suddenly the men got sound of her . . . the noise of her splashing covering their approach . . .

clear as running water, contemptuous, mischievous. Still laughing, she sank again, almost as near. Her mirth brought her lids close together. Her eyes, sparkling between thick files of golden lash, had almost a cruel sweetness.

She immediately flew away, departing over the water. Ralph cursed himself for the rest of the day. She returned before the week was out, however, and, after that, she continued to visit them at intervals of a few days. The sudden note of blue, even in the distance it seemed to connote coquetry, was the signal for all the men to stop work.

They could not think clearly or consecutively when she was about. She was one of those women whose presence creates disturbance, perturbation, unrest. The very sunshine seemed alive, the very air seemed vibrant with her. Even when she flew high, her shadow came between them and their work.

"She sure qualifies when it comes to fancy flying," said Honey Smith.

Her flying was daring, eccentric, temperamental, the apotheosis of brilliancy—genius. The sudden dart up, the terrifying drop down, seemed her main accomplishment. The wonder of it was that the men could never tell when she would land. Did it seem that she was aiming near, a sudden swoop would bring her to rest on a far-away spot. Was it certain that she was making for a distant tree-top, an unexpected drop would land her a few feet from their group.

She was the only one of the flying-girls who touched the earth. And she always led up to this feat as to the climax of what Honey called her "act." She would drop to the very ground, pose there, wavering like an enormous butterfly, her great wings opening and shutting. Sometimes, tempted by her actual nearness and fooled by her apparent weakness, the five men would make a rush in her direction. She would stand waiting and drooping until they had almost reached her. Then in a flash came the tremendous whir of her start, the violent beat of her whipping progress—she had become a blue speck.

She wore always what seemed to be gossamer, rose-color in one light, sky-color in another; a flexible film that one moment defined the long slim lines of her body and the next concealed them completely. Near, it could be seen that this drapery was woven of tiny buds, pink and blue; afar she seemed to float in a shimmering opalescent mist.

She teased them all, but it was evident from the beginning that she had picked Ralph to tease most. After a long while, the others learned to ignore, or to pretend to ignore, her tantalizing overtures. But Ralph could look at nothing else while she was about. She loved to lead him in a long, wild-goose chase across the island, dipping almost within reach one moment, losing herself at the zenith in another, alighting here and there with a will-o'-the-wisp capriciousness. Sometimes Ralph would return in such an exhausted condition that he dropped to sleep while he ate. At such times his mood was far from agreeable. His companions soon learned not to address him after these expeditions.

One afternoon, exercising heroic resolution, Ralph allowed Peachy to fly, apparently unnoticed, over his head, let her make an unaccompanied way half across the island.

But when she had passed out of earshot he watched her carefully.

"Say, Honey," he said after half an hour's fidgeting, "Peachy's settled down somewhere on the island. I should say on on the near shore of the lake. I don't know that anything's happened—probably nothing. But I hope to God," he added savagely, "she's broken a wing. Come on and find out what she's up to, will you?"

"Sure!" Honey agreed cheerfully. "All's fair in love and war. And this seems to be *both* love and war."

They walked slowly, and without talking, across the beach. When they reached the trail they dropped on all fours and pulled themselves noiselessly along. The slightest sound, the snapping of a twig, the flutter of a bird, brought them to quiet. An hour, they searched profitlessly.

Then suddenly they got sound of her, the languid slap of great wings opening and shutting. She had not gone to the lake. Instead, she had chosen for her resting place one of the tiny pools which, like pendants of a necklace, partially encircled the main body. She was sitting on a flat stone that projected into the water. Her drooped blue wings, glittering with moisture, had finally come to rest; they trailed behind her over the gray boulder and into a mass of vivid green water-grasses. One bare shoulder had broken through her rose-and-blue drapery. The odor of flowers came from her. Her hair, a braid over each shoulder, oozed like ropes of melted gold to her knees. A hand held each of these braids.

She was evidently preoccupied. Her

eyelids were down. Absently, she dabbled her white feet in the water. The noise of her splashing covered their approach. The two men signaled their plans, separated.

Five minutes went by, and ten and fifteen and twenty. Peachy still sat silent, moveless, meditative. Not once did she lift her eyelids.

Then Addington leaped like a cat from the bushes at her right. Simultaneously Honey pounced in her direction from the left.

But—whir-r-r-r—it was like the beating of tremendous drums. Straight across the pond she went, her toes shirring the water, and up and up and up—then off. And all the time she laughed, a delicious, rippling laughter which seemed to climb every scale that could carry coquetry.

The two men stood impotently watching her for a moment. The Honey broke into roars of delight. "Oh, you kid!" he called appreciatively to her. "She had her nerve with her to sit still all the time, knowing that we were creeping up on her, didn't she?" He turned to Ralph.

But Ralph did not answer, did not hear. His face was black with rage.

Of the flying girls, there remained now only one who held herself aloof, the "quiet one." It was many weeks before she visited the island. Then she came often, though always alone. There was something in her attitude that marked her off from the others.

"She doesn't come because she wants to," Billy Fairfax explained. "She comes because she's lonely."

THE "quiet one" habitually flew high and kept high, so high indeed that, after the first excitement of her tardy appearance, none but Billy gave her more than passing attention. Up to that time Billy had been a hard, a steady worker. But now he seemed unable to concentrate on anything. It was doubtless an extra exasperation that the "quiet one" puzzled him.

Her flying seemed to be more than a haphazard way of passing the time. It seemed to have a meaning; it was almost as if she were trying to accomplish something by it; and ever she perfected the figure that her flight drew on the sky. If she soared and dropped, she dropped and soared. If she curved and floated, she floated and curved. If she dipped and leaped, she leaped and dipped. All this he could see. But there were scores of minor evolutions that appeared to him only as confused motion.

One thing he caught immediately. Those lonely gyrations were not the exercise of the elusive coquetry which distinguished Peachy, It was more that the "quiet one" was pushed on by some intellectual or artistic impulse—that she expressed by the symbols of her complicated flight some theory, some philosophy of life, that she traced out some artless design, some primary pattern of beauty.

Julia always seemed to shine; she wore garments of gleamy-petalled, white flowers, silvery seaweeds, pellucid marsh-grasses, vines, golden or purple, that covered her with a delicate lustre. Her wings were different from the others; theirs flashed color, but hers gave light; and that light seemed to have run down on her flesh.

"What the thunder is she trying to do up there?" Ralph asked one day, stopping at Billy's side. Ralph's question was not in reality begotten so much of curiosity as of irritation. From the beginning the "quiet one" had interested him least of any of the flying girls, as, from the beginning, Peachy had interested him most.

"I don't know, of course." Billy spoke with reluctance. It was evident that he did not enjoy discussing the "quiet one" with Ralph. "At first, my theory was that flying was to her what dancing it to most girls. But, somehow, it seems to go deeper than that—as if it were art, or even creation. Anyway, there's a kind of bilateral symmetery about everything she does."

Billy fell into the habit, each afternoon, of strolling away from the rest, out of sound of their chaff. On the grassy top of one of the reefs, he found a spot where he could lie comfortably and watch the "quiet one". He used to spin long day-dreams there. She looked so remote, far up in the boiling blue, and so strange, that he had always an inexplicable sensation of reverence.

Now it was as though, in watching that aerial weaving and interweaving, he were assisting at a religious rite. He liked it best when the white day-moon was afloat. If he half-shut his eyes, it seemed to him that she and the moon made twin crescents of foaming silver, twin bubbles of white fire, twin films of fairy gossamer, twin vials that held the very essence of poetry.

Somehow he had always connected her with the moon. Indeed, in her whiteness, her coldness, her aloofness, she seemed the very sublimation of virginity. His first secret names for her were Diana and Cynthia. But there was another quality in

her that those names did not include—intellectuality. His favorite heroes were Julius Caesar and Edwin Booth—a quaint pair, taken in combination. In the long imaginary conversations which he held with her, he addressed her as Julia or Edwina.

Days and days went by and he could discover no sign that she had noticed him. It was typical of the "damned gentleman" side of Billy that he did not try to attract her attention. Indeed, his efforts were ever to efface himself.

One afternoon, after a long vigil in which, unaccountably, Julia had not appeared, he started to return to camp. It was a late twilight and a black, velvety one. The trees against a darkening curtain of sky had turned to bunches of tangled shadow, the reefs and rocks against the papery white of the sand to smutches and blobs of soot. Suddenly—and his heart pounded at the sound—the air began to vibrate and thrill.

He stopped short. He waited. His breath came fast; the vibration and thrill were coming closer.

He crystallized where he stood. It scarcely seemed that he breathed. And then—

Something alive and nebulous came floating out of the dusk towards him. It became a silver cloud, a white sculptured spirit of the air. It became an angel, a fairy, a woman—Julia. She flew not far off, level with his eyes and, as she approached, she slowed her stately flight. Billy made no movement. He only stood and waited and watched. But perhaps never before in his life had his eyes become so transparently the windows of his soul.

Quite as intently, Julia's eyes, big, gray, and dark-lashed, considered him. It seemed to Billy that he had never seen in any face so virginally young such a tragic seriousness, nor in any eyes, superficially so calm, such a troubled wonder.

He did not stir until she had drifted out of earshot, had become again a nebulous silver cloud drifting into the dusk, had merged with that dusk.

"What makes your eyes shine so?" said Honey, examining him keenly when he reached camp.

It was the first time Billy had known Julia to fly low. But he discovered gradually that only in the sunlight did she haunt the zenith. At twilight she always kept close to the earth. Billy took to haunting the reefs at dusk.

Again and again, the same thing happened.

Suddenly—and it was as if successive waves of electricity charged through his body—the quiet air began to purr and vibrate and drum. Out of the star-shot dusk, emerged the speeding whiteness of Julia. Always, as she approached, she slowed her flight. Always, as she passed, her sorrowing gray eyes would seek his burning blue ones. Billy could bring himself to speak of this strange experience to nobody, not even to Honey. For there was in it something untellable, unsharable, the wonder of the vision and the dream, the unreality of the apparition.

The excitement of these happenings kept the men entertained, but it also kept them keyed up to high tension. For a while they did not notice this themselves. But when they attempted to go back to their interrupted work, they found it hard to concentrate upon it. Frank Merrill had given up trying to make them patrol the beach. Unaided, day and night he attended to their signals.

"Well," said Honey Smith one day and, for the first time, there was a peevish note in his voice, "that 'natural selection' theory of yours, Ralph, seems to have worked out to some extent—but not enough. We seem to be comfortably divided, all ten of us, into happy couples, but hanged if I'm strong for this long-distance acquaintance."

"You're right, there," Ralph Addington admitted; "we don't seem to be getting any forwarder."

"It's all very pretty and romantic to have these girls flying about," Honey continued in a grumbling tone, "but it's too much like flirting with a canary-bird. Damn it all, I want to talk with them."

Ralph made a hopeless gesture. "It *is* a deadlock, I admit. I'm at my wits' end."

Perhaps Honey expressed what the others felt. At any rate, a sudden irascibility broke out among them. They were good-natured enough while the girls were about, but over their work and during their leisure, they developed what Honey described as "every kind of blue grouches." They fought heroically against it—and their method of fighting took various forms, according to the nature of each.

Frank Merrill lost himself in his books. Pete Murphy began the score of an opera vaguely heroic in theme; he wrote every spare moment. Billy Fairfax worked so hard that he grew thin. Honey Smith went off on long, solitary walks. Ralph Addington, as usual, showed an exasperating tendency toward contradiction, an unvarying contentiousness.

And then, without warning, all the girls ceased to come to the island. Three days went by, five, a week, ten days. One morning they all passed over the island, one by one, an hour or two between flights; but they flew high and fast, and they did not stop.

Ralph Addington had become more and more irascible.

That day the others maintained peace only by ignoring him.

"By the gods!" he snarled at night as they all sat dull and dumb about the fire. "Something's got to happen to change our way of living or murder'll break out in this community. And we'd better begin pretty quick to do something about it. What I'd like to know is," and he slapped his hand smartly against a flat rock, "coming down to cases—as we must sooner or later—what is our *right* in regard to these women?"

CHAPTER III

THE ETERNAL EVE

I DON'T exactly like your use of the word *right,* Ralph," said Billy. "You mean *duty,* don't you?"

"And he'd better change that to *privilege,*" put in Pete Murphy, scowling.

"Shut up," Honey interposed, flicking Pete on the ear with a pebble. "What do you know about machinery?"

Pete grinned, and subsided for a moment.

"No," Ralph went on obstinately, addressing himself this time to Billy, "I mean *right.* Of course, I mean right," he went on with one of his gusty bursts of irritation. "For God's sake, don't be so highbrow and altruistic."

"How about it, Frank?" Billy said, turning to Merrill.

"Well," said Frank slowly, "I don't exactly know how to the answer that question. I don't know what you mean by the word—*right.* I take it that you mean what our right would be if these flying maidens permitted themselves to become our friends. I would say, that, in such a case, you would have the only right that any man ever has, as far as women are concerned—the right to woo. If he wins, all well and good. If he loses, he must abide by the consequences."

"You're on, Frank," said Billy Fairfax. "You've said the last word."

"In normal condition, I'd agree with you," Ralph said. "But in these conditions I disagree utterly."

"How?" Frank asked. "Why?" He turned to Ralph with the instinctive equability that he always presented to an opponent in argument.

"Well, in the first place, we find ourselves in a situation unparalleled in the world's history." Ralph had the air of one who is saying aloud for the first time what he has said to himself many times. At any rate, he proceded with an unusual fluency and glibness. "Circumstances alter cases. We can't handle this situation by any of the standards we have formerly known. In fact, we've got to throw all our former standards overboard. There are five of these girls. There are five of us. *Voilà!* Following the laws of nature we have selected each of us the mates we prefer.

"Or, following the law that Bernard Shaw discovered, the ladies have selected, each of them, the mates that they prefer. They are now turning themselves inside out to prove to us that we selected them. *Viola!* The rest is obvious. If they come to terms, all right! If they don't—" He paused. "I repeat that we are placed in a situation new in the history of the world. I repeat the bromidion—circumstances alter cases. We may have to stay on this island as long as we live. I am perfectly willing to confess that just now I'd rather not be rescued. But it's over four months that we've been here. We must think of the future. The future justifies anything. If these girls don't come to terms, they must be made to come to terms. You'll find I'm right."

"Right!" exclaimed Billy hotly. "What are you talking about? Those are the principles of an Apache or a Hottentot."

"Or a cave man," Pete added.

"Well, what are we under our skins but Hottentots and Apaches and cave men?" said Ralph. "Now, I leave it to you. Look facts in the face. Use your common sense. Count out civilization and all its artificial rules. Think of our situation on this island, if we don't capture these women soon. We can't tell when they'll stop coming. We don't know what the conditions of their life may be. The caprice may strike them tomorrow to cut us out for good. Maybe their men will discover it—and prevent them from coming.

"A lot of things may happen to keep them away. What's to become of us in that case? We'll go mad, five men alone here. It isn't as though we could tame them by any gentle methods. You can't catch eagles by putting salt on their tails. In the first place, we can't get close enough to them,

because of their accursed wings, to prove that we wouldn't harm them. They've sent us a challenge—it's a magnificent one. They've thrown down the gage. And how have we responded? I bet they think we're a precious lot of mollycoddles! I bet they're laughing in their sleeves all the time. I'd hate to hear what they say about us. But the point I'm trying to make is not that. It's this: we can't afford to lose them. This place is a prison now. It will be worse than that if this keeps up—it'll be a madhouse."

"Do you mean to tell that you're advocating marriage by capture?" Billy asked in an incredulous voice.

"I mean to tell you I'm arguing *capture*," Ralph said with emphasis. "After that, you can trust the marriage question to take care of itself."

Argument broke out hydra-headed. They wrangled the whole evening. Theory at first guided them. In the beginning, names like Plato, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer preceded quotations; then, came Shaw, Havelock-Ellis, Kraft-Ebing, Weininger. Sleep deadened their discussion temporarily but it burst out at intervals all the next day. In fact, it semed to possess eternal vitality, eternal fascination. Leaving theory, they went for parallels of their strange situation, to history, to the Scriptures, to fiction, to drama, to poetry.

Honey ended every discussion with a philosophic, "Aside from the question, this marriage by capture isn't a sporting proposition. It's like jacking deer. I'm not for it. And, O Lord, what's the use of chewing the rag so much about it? Wait a while. We'll get them yet, I betchu!"

All of Honey's masculine pride flared in this buoyant assurance. It had apparently not yet occurred to him that he would not conquer Lulu in the end and conquer her by merely submitting to her wooing of him.

And in the meantime, the voiceless tête-à-têteing of the five couples continued.

"Say, Ralph," Honey said one day in a calm interval, "it's just occurred to me that we haven't seen those girls flying in a bunch for quite some time. Don't suppose they've quarreled, do you?"

Everybody stopped work to stare at him. "I bet that's the answer," Ralph exclaimed. His voice held the note of one for whom a private mystification has at last broken.

"But what do you suppose they've quarreled about?" Pete Murphy asked.

"Me," Honey said promptly.

Ralph laughed absent-mindedly. "It's a hundred to one shot that they're quarreling about us, though," he said. For some mysterious reason this theory raised his spirits perceptibly.

"But—to get down to brass tacks," Pete asked in a puzzled tone, "what have we done to make them quarrel?"

"Oh, we've done nothing," Ralph answered with one of his lordly assumptions of a special knowledge. "It's just the disorganization that always falls on women when men appear on their horizon. They're absolutely without sex-loyalty, you know. They seem to have principle enough in regard to some things, a few things. But the moment a man appears, it's all off. West of Suez, they'll lie and steal; east of Suez, they'll betray and murder as easy as breathe."

"Cut that out, Addington," Pete Murphy commanded in a dangerous voice. "I don't stand for that kind of talk."

Ralph glared. "Won't stand for it?" he repeated. "I'd like to know how the hell you're going to help yourself?"

"I'll find a way, and pretty damned quick," Pete retorted.

It was the closest approach to a quarrel that had yet occurred. The other three men hastily threw themselves into the breach. "Shut up, you Irish," Honey called to Pete. "Remember you came over in the steerage."

Pete grinned and subsided.

"As sure as shooting," Honey said, "those girls have quarreled. I bet we never see them again."

IT WAS a long time before they saw any of them; but, curiously enough, the next time the flying girls visited the island they came in a group.

It had been sultry, the first of a long series of sticky, muggy days. What threatened to be a thunderstorm and then, as Honey said, failed to "make good," came up in the afternoon. Just as the sky was at its blackest, Honey called, "Hurroo! Here they come!"

The effect of the approach of the flying-maidens was so strange as to make them unfamiliar. There was no sun to pour a liquid iridescence through their wings. All the high lights of their plumage had dulled. Painted in flat primary colors, they looked like paper dolls pasted on the inky thundercloud. As usual, when they came in a group, they wove in and out in a limited spherical area, achieving extraordinary effects in close wheeling.

As the girls made for the island, a new impulse seized Honey. He ran down the beach, dashed into the water, swam out to meet them.

"Come back, you fool!" Frank yelled. "There may be sharks in that water."

But Honey only laughed. He was a magnificent swimmer. He seemed determined to give, in an alien element, an exhibition which would equal that of the flying girls. The effect on them was immediate; they broke ranks and floated, watching every move.

To hold their interest, Honey nearly turned himself inside out.

At first he tore the water white with the vigor of his trudgeon-stroke. Then turning from left to right, he employed the side-stroke. From that, he went to the breast-stroke. Last of all, he floated, dove, swam under water so long that the girls began uneasily to fly back and forth, to twitter in alarm.

Finally he emerged and floated again.

"He swims like a motorboat!" said Ralph admiringly. Suddenly Lulu fluttered away from her companions, dropped so low that she could have touched Honey with her hand, and flew protectingly above him.

The men on the beach watched these proceedings with a gradual diminution of their alarm, with the admiration that Honey in the water always excited, with the amusement that Lulu's fearless display of infatuation always developed.

"Oh, my God!" Frank called suddenly. "There's a shark!"

Simultaneously, the others saw what he saw—a sinister black triangle swiftly shearing the water. They ran, yelling, down to the water's edge, and stood there trying to shout a warning over the noise of the surf.

Honey did not get it at once. He was still floating, his smiling, up-turned face looking into Lulu's smiling, down-turned one. Then, rolling over, he apparently caught a glimpse of the black fin bearing so steadily on him. He made immediately for the shore but he had swum too far and fast.

Lulu was slower even than he in realizing the situation. For a moment, obviously piqued at his action, she dropped and hung in the rear. Perhaps her mates signaled to her, perhaps her intuition flashed the warning. Suddenly she looked back. The scream which she emitted was as shrill with terror as any wingless woman's. Swooping down like an eagle, she seized Honey under the shoulders, lifted him out of the water. His weight crippled her. For though the first impulse of her terror carried her high, she sank at once until Honey hung just above the water.

And continuously she screamed.

The other girls realized her plight in an instant. They dropped like stones to her side, eased her partially of Honey's weight. Julia alone did not touch him. She floated above, calling directions. The group of girls arose gradually, flew swiftly over the water toward the beach. The men ran to meet them.

"Don't go any further," Billy commanded in a peremptory voice unusual with him. "They'll not put him down if we come too near."

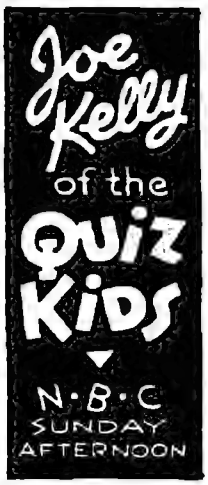
The men hesitated, stopped.

Immediately the girls deposited Honey on the sand.

"Did you notice the cleverness of that breakaway?" said Pete. "He couldn't have got a clinch in anywhere."

But to do Honey justice, he attempted nothing of the sort. He lay flat and still until his rescuers were at a safe height. Then he sat up and smiled radiantly at them. "Ladies, I thank you," he said. "And I'll see that you get a Carnegie medal if it takes the rest of my life. I guess," he remarked unabashed, as his companions joined him, "it will be fresh water swimming for your little friend hereafter."

Nobody spoke for a while. His compan-



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tions were still white and Billy Fairfax even shook.

"You looked like an engraving that used to hang over my bed when I was a child," said Ralph, with an attempt at humor that had, coming from him, a touching quality, "A bunch of angels lugging a dead man to heaven. You'd have been a ringer for it if you'd had a shave."

"Well, the next time the girls come, I'm going to swim out among the pretty sharks," said Pete, obviously trying to echo Ralph's light note. "By Jove, hear them chatter up there. They're talking all at once and at the top of their lungs just like your sisters and your cousins and your aunts."

"They're as pale as death, too," observed Billy. "Look at that!"

The flying-maidens had come together in a compact circular group, hands over each other's shoulders, wings faintly fluttering. Perceptibly they clung to each other for support. Their faces had turned chalky; their heads drooped. Intertwined thus, they drifted out of sight.

"Lord, they are beautiful, close to!" Honey said. "You never saw such complexions! Or such eyes and teeth!"

FOR several days, the girls did not appear on Angel Island. All that time, the capture argument lay in abeyance. Even Ralph, who had introduced the project, seemed touched by the gallantry of Honey's rescue. Honey, himself, was strangely subdued; his eternal monologue had dried up; he seemed preoccupied. Nevertheless, it was he, who, one night, reopened the discussion with a defiant flat, "Well, boys, I might as well tell you, I've swung over to Ralph's side. I'm for the capture of those girls, and capture as soon as we can make it."

"Well, I'll be damned," said Billy. "After they saved your life! Honey, I guess I don't know you any more."

"What's changed you?" Pete asked in amazement.

"Can't tell you why—don't know myself why—when you get the answer, tell me. Only, in the ten minutes that those girls packed me through the air, I did some quick thinking. I can't explain to you why we've got the right to capture them. But we have. That's all there is to it."

War broke out with a new animosity; for they had, of course, now definitely divided into sides. Their conversation always turned into argument now, no matter how peaceably and innocently it began.

The girls had begun to visit the island again, singly now, singly always. Discussion died down temporarily and the wordless tête-à-têteing began again. Lulu hovered ever at Honey's shoulder. Clara postured always within Pete's vision. Chiquita took up her eternal vigil on Frank's reef. Peachy discovered new wonders of what Honey called "trick flying." Julia became a fixed white star in their blue noon sky.

A day or two or three of this long-distance wooing, and argument exploded more vehemently than ever. Honey and Ralph still maintained that, as the ruling sex of a man-managed world, they had the right of discovery to these women. Frank still maintained that, as a supra-human race, the flying girls were subject to supra-human laws. Billy and Pete still maintained that, as the development not only of the race but of the individual depended on the treatment of the female by the male, the capture of these independent beings at this stage of civilization would be a return to barbarism.

After one night of wrangling, they came to the agreement that no one of them would take steps toward capture until all five had consented to it. They drew up a paper to this effect and signed it.

Their cabins were nearly completed now. Boundless leisure threatened to open before them. More and more in the time which they were alone they fell into the habits which their individual tastes developed. Frank still worked on his library. He had transferred the desk and the bookcases to the interior of his hut. He spent all his spare time there arranging, classifying, and cataloguing his books. Billy fell into an orgy of furniture-making and repairing. Addington began, unaided, to build a huge cabin, bigger than the others, and separated a little distance from them. Nobody asked him what it was for. Honey took long solitary walks into the interior of the island. He returned with great bunches of uprooted flowers which he planted against the cabin walls.

Pete dragged out from an unexplored trunk a box of water colors, a block of paper. Now, when he was not working on a symphonic poem, he was coping with the wonders of the semitropical coloring. His companions rallied and harried him, especially about the poem; but he could always silence them with a threat to read it aloud. All the Celt in him had come to the surface. They heard him chanting his numbers in the depths of the forest; sometimes he intoned them, swinging on the branch of a high tree. He even wandered over the

reefs, reciting the verses to the waves.

One day, late in the afternoon, Billy lay on his favorite spot on the southern reef, dreaming. High up in the air, Julia flashed and gyrated, revolved and spun. It seemed to Billy that he had never seen her go so high. She looked like a silver feather. But as he looked, she went higher and higher, so high that she disappeared vertically.

A strange sense of loneliness fell on Billy. This was the first time since she had begun to come regularly to the island that she had cut their tryst short. He waited. She did not appear. A minute went by. Another and another and another. His sense of loneliness deepened to uneasiness. Still there was no sign of Julia. Uneasiness became alarm. Ah, there she was at last—a speck, a dot, a splotch. How she was flying!

Like a bullet, the conviction struck him. She was falling!

Memories of certain airplane explorations surged into his mind. "She's frozen," he thought to himself. "She can't move her wings!" Terror paralyzed him; horror bound him. He stood still—numb, dumb, helpless.

Down she came like an arrow. Her wings kept straight above her head, moveless, still. He could see her breast and shoulders heave and twist, and contort in a fury of effort. Underneath her were the trees. He had a sudden, lightning-swift vision of a falling aviator that he had once seen. The horror of what was coming turned his blood to ice. But he could not move; nor could he close his eyes.

"Oh, God! Oh, God! Oh, God!" he groaned. And, finally, "Oh, thank God!"

Julia's wings were moving. But apparently she still had little control of them. They flapped frantically a half-minute; but they had arrested her fall; they held her up. Then continued to support her, although she beat about in jagged circles. Alternately floating and fluttering, she caught on an air-current, hurled herself on it, floated; then, as though she were sliding through some gigantic pillar of quiet air, sank earthward. She seized the topmost bough of one of the high trees, threw her arms across it and hung limp. She panted; her eyes closed, but the tears streamed from under her eyelids.

BILLY ran close. He made no attempt to climb the tree to which she clung, so weakly accessible. But he called up to her broken words of assurance, broken phrases of comfort that ended in a wild harangue of love and entreaty.

After a while her breath came back. She pulled herself up on the bough and sat huddled there, her eyelids down, her silvery fans drooping, the great mass of her honey-colored hair drifting over the green branches, her drapery of white lilies slashed and hanging in tatters, the tears still streaming. Except for its ghastly whiteness, her face showed no change of expression. She did not sob or moan, she did not even speak; she sat relaxed. The tears stopped flowing gradually. Her eyelids lifted. Her eyes, stark and dark in her white face, gazed straight down into Billy's eyes.

And then Billy *knew*.

He stood moveless, staring up at her; never, perhaps, had human eyes asked so definite a question or begged so definite a boon.

She sat motionless, staring straight down at him.

But her eyes continued to withhold all answer, all reassurance.

After a while, she stirred and the spell broke. She opened and shut her wings half a dozen times before she ventured to leave her perch. But once in the air, all her strength, physical and mental, seemed to come back. She shook the hair out of her eyes. She pulled her drapery together. For a moment, she lingered near, floating, almost motionless, white, shining, carved, chiseled—like a marvelous piece of aerial sculpture. Then a flush of a delicate dawn-pink came into her white face. She caught the great tumbled mass of hair in both hands, tied it about her head. Swift as a flash of lightning, she turned, wheeled, soared, dipped. And for the first time, Billy heard her laugh. Her laughter was like a child's—gleeful. But each musical ripple thrust like a knife into his heart.

He watched her cleave the distance, watched her disappear. Then, suddenly, a curious weakness came over him. His head swam and he could not see distinctly. Every bone in his body seemed to repudiate its function; his flexed muscles slid him gently to the earth. Time passed. After a while consciousness came back. His fuzziness ceased. But he lay for a long while, face downward, his forehead against the cool moss.

Again and again that awful picture came, the long, white, girl-shape shooting earthward, the ghastly, tortured face, the frenzied, heaving shoulders. It was to come again many times in the next week, that picture, and for years to make recurrent horror in his sleep.

He returned to the camp white, wrung, and weak. Apparently his companions had been busy at their various occupations. Nobody had seen Julia's fall; at least nobody mentioned it. After dinner, when the nightly argument broke into its first round, he was silent for a while. Then, "Oh, I might as well tell you, Frank, and you, Pete," he said abruptly, "that I've gone over to the other side. I'm for capture, friendship by capture, marriage by capture—whatever you choose to call it—but capture."

The other four stared at him. "What's happened to you and Ju—" Honey began. But he stopped, flushing.

Billy paid no attention to the bitten-off end of Honey's question. "Nothing's happened to me," he lied simply and directly. "I don't know why I've changed, but I have. I think this is a case where the end justifies the means. Women don't know what's best for them. We do. Unguided, they take the awful risks of their awful ignorance. Moreover, they are the conservative sex. They have no conscious initiative.

"These flying women, for instance, have plenty of physical courage but no mental or moral courage. They hold the whip-hand, of course, now. Anything might happen to them. This situation will prolong itself indefinitely unless—unless we beat their cunning by our strategy." He paused. "I don't think they're competent to take care of themselves. I think it's our duty to take care of them. I think the sooner—" He paused again. "At the same time, I'm prepared to keep to our agreement. I won't take a step in this matter until we've all come round to it."

"If it wasn't for their wings," Honey said.

Billy shuddered violently. "If it wasn't for their wings," he agreed.

Frank bore Billy's defection in the spirit of classic calm with which he accepted everything. But Pete could not seem to reconcile himself to it. He was constantly trying to draw Billy into debate.

"I won't argue the matter, Pete," Billy said again and again. "I can't argue it. I don't pretend even to myself that I'm reasonable or logical, or just or ethical. It's only a feeling or an instinct. But it's too strong for me. I can't fight it. It's as if I'd taken a journey drugged and blindfolded. I don't know how I got on this side—but I'm here."

The effect of this was to weaken a little the friendship that had grown between Billy and Pete. Also Honey pulled a little away from Ralph and slipped nearer to his old place in Billy's regard. But now there were three waring elements in camp. Honey, Ralph, and Billy hobnobbed constantly. Frank more than ever devoted himself to his reading. Pete kept away from them all, writing furiously most of the day.

"We're going to have a harder time with him than with Frank," Billy remarked once.

"I guess we can leave that matter to take care of itself," Ralph said with one of his irritating superior smiles. "How about it, Honey?"

"Surest thing you know," Honey answered reassuringly. "All you've got to do is wait—believe muh!"

"It does seem as if we'd waited pretty long," Honey himself fumed two weeks later, "I say we three get together and repudiate that agreement."

"That would be dishonorable," Billy said, "and foolish. You can see for yourself that we cannot stir a step in this matter without co-operation. As opponents, Pete and Frank could warn the girls off faster than we could lure them on."

"That's right, too," agreed Honey. "But I'm damned tired of this," he added drearily.

"Not more tired than we are," said Billy.

An incident that varied the monotony of the deadlock occurred the next day. Pete Murphy packed up food and writing materials and, without a word, decamped into the interior. He did not return that day, that night, or the next day, or the next night.

"Say, don't you think we ought to go after him?" Billy said again and again, "something may have happened."

And, "No!" Honey always answered. "Trust that one to take care of himself. You can't kill him."

PETE worked gradually across the island to the other side. There the beach was slashed by many black, saw-toothed reefs. The sea leaped up upon them on one side and the trees bore down upon them on the other. The air was filled with tumult, the hollow roar of the waves, the strident hum of the pines. For the first day, Pete entertained himself with exploration, clambering from one reef to another, pausing only to look listlessly off at the horizon, climbing a pine here and there, swinging on a bough while he stared absently back over the island. But although his look fixed on the

restless peacock glitter of the sea, or the moveless green cushions that the massed trees made, it was evident that it took no account of them; they served only the more closely to set his mental gaze on its half-seen vision.

The second morning, he arose, bathed, breakfasted, lay for an hour in the sun; then drew pencil and paper from his pack. He wrote furiously. If he looked up at all, it was only to gaze the more fixedly inward. But mainly his head hung over his work.

In the midst of one of these periods of absorption, a flower fell out of the air on his paper. It was brilliant, orange-colored tropical bloom, so big and so freshly plucked that it dashed his verse with dew. For an instant he stared stupidly at it. Then he looked up.

Just above him, not very high, her green-and-gold wings spread broad like a butterfly's, floated Clara. Her body was sheathed in green vines, delicately shining. Her hair was wreathed in fluttering yellow orchid-like flowers, her arms and legs wound with them. She was flying lower than usual. And, under her wreath of flowers, her eyes looked straight into his.

Pete stared at her stupidly as he had stared at the flower. Then he frowned. Deliberately he dropped his eyes. Deliberately he went on writing.

Whir-r-r-r-r! Pete looked up again. Clara was beating back over the island, a tempest of green-and-gold.

Again, he concentrated on his work.

He wrote all the rest of the day, and by firelight far into the night. He wrote all the next morning. In the middle of the afternoon, a seashell struck his paper, glanced off.

It was Clara again.

This time, apparently, she had come from the ocean. Sea-kelp, still glistening with brine, encased her close as armor. A little pointed cap of kelp covered her tawny hair as with a helmet. That gave her a piquant quality of boyishness. She was flying lower than he had ever seen her, and as Pete's eyelids came up she dropped nearer, threw herself into one of her sinuous poses, arms and legs outstretched close, hands and feet cupped, wrists, ankles, hips, shoulders all moving. She looked straight down into Pete's eyes; and this time she smiled.

Pete stared for another long moment. Then as though summoning all his resolution, he withdrew his eyes, nailed them to his paper. Clara peppered him with shells and pebbles; but he continued to ignore her. He did not look up again until a whir-r-r-r-r—loud at first but steadily diminishing—apprised him of her flight.

Pete again wrote the rest of the day and by firelight far into the night. In the middle of the morning he stopped suddenly, weighted his paper down with a stone, rolled over on to the pine-needles, and fell immediately into a deep sleep. He lay for hours, his face down, resting on his arm.

Whir-r-r-r-r!

Pete awoke with a start. His manuscript was gone. He leaped to his feet, stared wildly about. Not far off Clara was flying, almost on the ground. As he watched, she ascended swiftly. She held his poem in her hands. She studied it, her head bent. She did not once look up or back; her eyes still jealously glued to the pencil-scratchings, she drifted out to sea, disappeared.

Pete did not move. He watched Clara intently until she melted into the sky. But as he watched, his creative mood broke and evaporated. And suddenly another emotion, none the less fiercely ravaging, sluiced the blood into his face, filled his eyes with glitter, shook him as though a high wind were blowing, sent him finally speeding at a maniacal pace over the reefs.

"SAY, do you think we'd better organize a searching party?" Honey asked finally.

"Not yet," said Ralph, "here he comes."

Pete was running down the trail like a deer. "I've finished my poem," he yelled jubilantly. "Every last word of it. And now, boys," he added briskly before they could recover their breath, "I'm with you on this capture question."

For an instant, the others stared and blinked. "What do you mean, Pete?" Honey asked stupidly, after an instant.

"Well, I'm prepared to go as far as you like."

"But what changed you?" Honey persisted.

"Oh, hang it all," Pete said and never had his little black, fiery Irish face so twisted with irritation, so flamed with spirit, "a poet's so constituted that he's got to have a woman round to read his verse to. I want to teach Clara English so she can hear that poem."

There was a half-minute of silence. Then his listeners broke into roars.

They immediately broke the news of Pete's desertion to Merrill. Frank received it without any appearance of surprise. But

he announced, with a sudden boom of authority in his big voice; that he expected them all to stand by their agreement. Billy answered for the rest that they had no intention of doing anything else. But the four were now in high spirits. Among themselves, they no longer said, "If we capture them," but "When we capture them."

The stress of the situation at once pulled Frank away from his books. Again he took complete charge of the little group. He was a natural disciplinarian, as they had learned at the time of the wreck. Now his sense of responsibility developed a severity that was almost austerity. He kept them constantly at work. In private the others chafed at his tone of authority. But in his presence they never failed of respect. Besides, his remarkable unselfishness compelled their esteen, a shy vein of innocent, humorless sweetness their affection. "Old Frank" they always called him.

One afternoon, Frank started on one of the long walks which latterly he had abandoned. He left three of his underlings behind. Pete painted a water color; Clara, weaving back and forth, watched his progress. Ralph worked on the big cabin they called the Clubhouse—Peachy whirling back and forth in wonderful air-patterns for his benefit. A distant speck of silver indicated Julia; Billy must be on the reef. Honey had left camp fifteen minutes before for the solitary afternoon tramp that had become a daily habit with him.

Frank's path lay part way through the jungle. For half an hour he walked so sunk in thought that he glanced neither to right nor the left. Then he stopped suddenly, held by some invisible, intangible, impalpable force. He listened. The air hummed delicately, hummed with an alien element, hummed with something that was neither the susurrus of insects nor the music of birds.

He moved onward slowly and quietly. The hum grew and strengthened. It became a sound. It divided into component parts, whistlings, trillings, twitterings, callings. Birdlike they were—but they could come only from the human throat. Impersonal they were—and yet they were female and male sounds. Frank looked about him carefully. A little distance away, the trail sent off a tiny feeler into the jungle. It dipped into one of the pretty glades which diversified the flatness of the island. Creeping slowly, Frank followed the sound.

Halfway down the slope, Honey Smith was standing, staring upwards. His lips were open and from them came a sound.

Above him, almost within reach, Lulu floated, gazing downward. She had a listening look; and she listened fascinated. She seemed to lie motionless on the air. It was the first time that Merrill had seen Lulu so close. But in some mysterious way he knew that there was something abnormal about her. Her piquant Kanaka face shone with a strange emotion. Her narrow eyes were big with wonder; her blood-red lips had trembled open. She stared at Honey as if she were seeing him from a new angle. She stared, but sound came from her parted lips.

It was Honey who whistled and called. It was Lulu who twittered and trilled. No mating male bird could have put more of entreating tenderness into his voice. No mating female bird could have answered with more perplexity of abandon.

For a moment Frank stared. Then, with a sudden sense of eavesdropping, he moved noiselessly back until he struck the main trail.

HE KEPT on until he came to the shady side of his favorite reef. He took from his pocket a book and began to read. To. his surprise and discomfort, he could not get into it. Something psychological kept coming between him and the printed page. He tried to concentrate on a paragraph, a sentence, a phrase. It was like eating granite. It was like drinking dust. He stared at the words, but they seemed to float off the page.

That, then, was what all the other four men were doing while he was reading and writing, or while, with narrowed, scrutinizing eyes, he followed Chiquita's languid flight.

He had not seen Chiquita for a week; he had been so busy getting the first part of his monograph into shape that he had not come to the reef.

He took up his book again. He glued his eyes to the print. Five minutes passed; he was gazing at the same words. But now instead of floating off the page, they engaged in little dances, dizzyingly concentric. Suddenly something that was not of the mind interposed another obstacle to concentration, a jagged, purple shadow.

It was Chiquita.

Frank leaped to his feet and stood staring. The quickness of his movement—ordinarily he moved measuredly—frightened her. She fluttered, drifted away, paused. Frank stiffened. His immobility reassured her. She drifted nearer. Some-

thing impelled Frank to hold his rigid pose. But, for some unaccustomed reason, his hand trembled. His book dropped noiselessly onto the soft grass.

Chiquita floated down, closer than ever before.

She had undoubtedly just waked up. The dew of dreams still lay on her luscious lips and in her great black eyes. Scarlet flowers, f l a t-p e t a l e d, black-stamened, wreathed her dusky hair. Scarlet bands outlined her dusky shoulders. Scarlet streamers trailed in her wake. Never had she seemed more lazy and languid, more velvety and voluptuous, more colorful and sumptuous.

Frank stared and stared. Then, following an inexplicable impulse, he whistled as he had heard Honey whistle; and called as he heard Honey call, the plaintive, entreating note of the male bird.

The same look which had come into Lulu's face came into Chiquita's, a look of wonder and alarm and— She trembled, but she sank slowly, head foremost, like a diver.

Frank continued softly to call and whistle. After an interval, another mysterious instinct impelled him to stop. Chiquita's lips moved; from them came answering sound, faint, breathy, scarcely voiced but exquisitely musical, exquisitely feminine, the call of the female bird.

When she stopped, Frank took it up. He raised his hand to her gently. As if that gave her confidence, she floated nearer, so close that he could have touched her. But some new wisdom taught him not to do that. She sank lower and lower until she was just above him. Frank did not move—nor speak now.

She fluttered and continued to sink. Now, he could look straight into her eyes. Frank had never really looked into a woman's eyes before. The depth of Chiquita's was immeasurable. There were dreams on the surface. But his gaze pierced through the dreams, through layer on layer of purple black, to where stars lay. Some emotion that constantly grew in her seemed to melt and fuse all these layers; but the stars still held their shine.

Slowly still, but as though at the urge of a compelled abandon, Chiquita sank lower and lower. Nearer she came and nearer. The pollen from the flowers at her breast sifted on to his face. Now their eyes were level. And now—

She kissed him.

* * *

Billy, Ralph, and Pete sat on the sand bantering Honey, who had returned in radiant spirits from his walk.

"Here comes old Frank," Billy said. "He's running. But he's staggering. By George, I should think he was drunk."

Frank was drunk, but not with wine. When he came nearer, they saw his face was white.

"You're right boys," he said quietly, "and I'm wrong." For a moment, he added nothing; but they knew what he meant. "A situation like this is special; it requires special laws. It's the masculine right of eminent domain. I give my consent—I—agree to anything you want to do."

CHAPTER IV

THE ETERNAL ADAM

"THE question before the house now is," said Ralph, "how are we going to do it? Myself, I'd be strong for winging them sometime when they're flying low."

The other four men burst into shocked remonstrance.

"Well, don't go up in the air," Ralph said in an amused voice. "It wouldn't hurt them anyway. And it seems to me if we've definitely made up our minds to capture them, the best way is the swiftest and surest."

"But to shoot a woman!" Pete exclaimed.

"Well, don't worry," Ralph answered him, "we haven't any guns. I did think of bows and arrows though." He said this in the tone of one who throws out a suggestion, and he stopped to study the faces of his fellow conspirators. Equally they expressed horror and disgust. "All right," he said with equanimity. "I see you're like all human nature. You're determined to pull off this cave man stunt, but you want to do it with every appearance of chivalry and generosity. You're saving face. All right! I'm agreeable—although personally I think the quickest way the most merciful. Has anybody a better plan?"

Nobody had. It was obvious, though, from the talk that followed, that they had all been secretly considering the matter.

"The only thing for us to do," Honey said at once, "is to lie in wait. Conceal ourselves in the bushes and leap out on them."

"That sounds easy," Ralph said. "But has it occurred to you that these girls have the ears of wild animals? Has it occurred to you that they have all the in-

stincts and cunning of the animal and all the intuition and prescience of the woman? Has it occurred to you that they always approach from above?"

"The only thing I can think of," said Billy, "is to lasso them. Only, we've got to get them to alight and walk round first. But either they can't walk or they don't like to walk. We must offer them some bait. Now, what in thunder would tempt a creature that's one-third woman, one-third bird, and one-third angel to come down to earth?"

For a moment they were all silent considering this question. "By Jove," Ralph burst out finally, "what are we all sitting here like dopes for? Those trunks are full of women's clothes. Did you ever see a woman yet who wouldn't fall for ribbons and laces?"

"Good shot!" eclaimed Honey. "Let's go through the women-truck to-morrow and pick out some things that would please a girl. We'll put them on the beach a good distance off from us, so they'll not think it's a trap. If we do that every day for a week or two they'll get accustomed to walking round while we're working. It's our play to take no notice of them whatever."

"That's the answer," Ralph said in a tone of satisfaction.

Immediately after breakfast, the next morning, they made for the file of trunks so contemptuously rejected the first week of their stay. Honey, who was always head and shoulders in front of the others, broke open the first one.

"By jiminy, boys!" he shouted, seizing something that lay on top and waving it over his head. "We've got them going! By George," he went on, lowering his voice, "I bet that belonged to some darned pretty woman."

The men crowded about him; and, as they examined his find, their faces softened. Nothing could more subtly have emanated femininity. It was a hand-mirror of silver. Two carved Cupids held the glass between them. Their long wings made the handle.

"Put it down there on the hard sand," Ralph said, "where they can't fail to see it."

"Hold!" exclaimed Honey in a tone of burlesque warning. "There must be five mirrors. He knows nothing of women who thinks that one mirror may be divided among five girls. I hope Lulu cops this one."

His companions did not laugh. Apparently they were impressed with the sapience of his remark. They searched the trunks until they had gathered the five that Honey demanded. They placed them in a row just above the high-water line. The mirrors caught the sunlight, reflected it.

"They won't do a thing to those girls," said Honey. There was the glee in his voice of a little boy who is playing a practical joke.

The girls came in a group in the middle of the afternoon.

"They've spotted them already," said Honey. "Trust a woman and a looking-glass."

The discovery ruined discipline; it broke ranks; the five girls flew high, flew low, flew separated, flew grouped, crowded about Julia, obviously asking her advice. Obviously she gave it; for following her quick clear tones of advice came a confused chattering—a remonstrance. Then Peachy, Clara, Chiquita, and Lulu dropped a little. Julia alone came no nearer. She alone showed no excitement.

The men meantime watched. They could not, as they had so loftily resolved, pretend to ignore the situation. But they kept silent and still. Once or twice the girls glanced curiously in their direction. But in the main they ignored them. Descending in big, slow, cautious, sliding curves, they circled nearer and nearer the sand.

Suddenly Lulu screamed. Still screaming, she bounded—it was almost that she bounced—s t r a i g h t up. The others streamed to the zenith in the wake of her panic, caught up, closed about her. There floated down the shrillness of agitated question and answer.

"What the Hades—" Ralph said in a mystified tone.

"I've got it," said Honey. "She caught a look at herself in one of the mirrors and she's scared. Don't be afraid, Lulu," he called in a reassuring tone; "it won't hurt you."

Lulu evidently got what he intended to convey. Again she sank slowly, hovered an instant close to the sand, brought her face near to a mirror, bounced up, dipped down, brought her face nearer, fluttered, put out one hand, withdrew it, put out the other, withdrew it, put out both, seized a mirror firmly, darted to the zenith.

"Well, what do you know about that!" said Billy. And, "Oh, the angels!" exclaimed Pete. Ralph's face opened in the fatuous grin which always meant satis-

faction with him. Honey turned somersaults of delight. Even Frank twinkled.

For, high up in the heaven, five heads positively bumped over the meager oval of silver.

Lulu finally pulled out of the crowd and flew away. But all the time she held the mirror straight before her, clasped tightly in two hands, ecstatically "eating herself up" as Honey described it.

The men continued to watch.

Gradually, one after another, the other four girls fell under the lure of their vanity and their acquisitiveness.

Clara dove first, clutched a long-handled oval of yellow celluloid. Next Chiquita swam lazily downward, made a brief scarlet flutter on the beach, seized an elaborate double mirror set in gilded wood. Peach followed; she chose a heart-shaped glass, ebony-framed. Last of all, Julia came floating slowly down. She took the only one that was left; it was of course, the smallest; it was framed in carved ivory.

FOR the next ten minutes, the sky presented a picture of five winged women, stationed at various points of the compass, ecstatically studying their own beautiful faces in mirrors held in their white, strong-looking hands.

Then, flying together again, they discovered that the mirrors reflected. At first, this created panic, then amusement. Ensued a delicious girl-frolic. Darting through the air, laughing, jabbering, they played tag, throwing the light into each other's eyes. A little later Peachy gathered them into a bunch and whispered instructions. Immediately they began flashing the mirrors into the men's faces. To escape this bombardment, their victims had finally to throw themselves face downward on the sand.

In the midst of this excitement came disaster.

Lulu dropped her mirror.

It hit square and shattered on the sand to many brilliant splinters. Lulu fell like a stone, seized the empty frame, gazed into it for a heart-broken second, burst into tears.

It was the first time that the men as a group had ever seen in the flying girls an exhibition of this feminine faculty. For a moment, they watched her, deeply interested as though confronted by an unfamiliar phenomenon. Then Billy wriggled. "Say, stop, her, somebody," he begged, "I hate to hear a woman cry."

"So do I," said Peter, his face twisted into creases of discomfort. "She's your girl, Honey. Stop her, for God's sake."

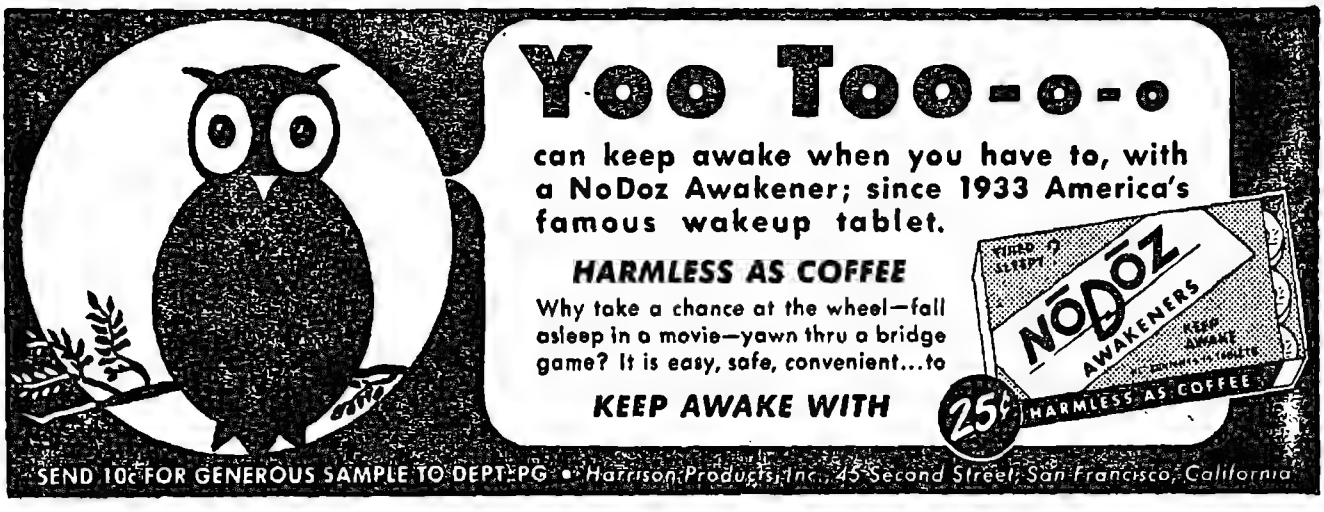
"How's he going to stop her, I'd like to know?" demanded Ralph. "We don't converse very fluently yet, you know."

"Well, I know how to stop her," said Honey, leaping up. "I say, Lulu," he called. "Stop that crying, that's a good girl. It makes us all sick. I'll find you another mirror in a moment."

Lulu did not stop crying. Perhaps she was not too primitive to realize that tears are the argument a woman negotiates best. She wailed and wept assiduously.

Honey, in the meantime, flew to the trunks. He dumped one after another; clothes flew from either energetic hand like gravel from a shovel. Suddenly he gave a yell of triumph and brandished—It was cheap and brass-bound, but it reflected the sunlight as well as though it had been framed in massy gold.

"Here you are, Lulu!" he called. He ran down the beach and held it up to her. Lulu caught the reflection. She dropped sheer. In her eagerness, she took it from Honey's very hand. And as she seized it, a tear dropped on his upturned cheek.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And as the tear dropped, her face broke into smiles.

"Well," exclaimed Ralph an instant later, "if I'd had any idea that they were angels and not females, this would settle the question for me. Good Lord! Well, you *have* got a temper, my lady."

It was of Julia he spoke.

For, descending slowly and deliberately, Julia hovered an instant above a big rock. Then, with a tremendous slashing impulse of a powerful arm, she hurled her mirror on it. She flew in a very frenzy of haste into the west.

The girls returned the next morning early.

"After the graft," Ralph commented cynically.

Honey had been rifling the trunks again. He walked down to the beach with an armful of fans, piled them there, returned to camp. The girls descended, eyed them, ascended, gathered together, talked, descended, ascended again.

"What's the row?" Billy asked.

"They don't know what they're for," said Pete. He ran down on to the beach, seized a fan of feathers, opened it, and stood fanning himself. Then he put it down and ran back.

He had hardly returned to the group of men when Chiquita swooped down and seized the fan that he had dropped. The feathers were the exact scarlet of her wings. She floated about, fanning herself slowly, her teeth flashing white in her dusky face.

"By jiminy, if she only added a mantilla, she'd be a Spanish angel," Billy commented whimsically.

The other girls dropped down after a while and seized a fan, or in Clara's case two, and Peachy's three. They sailed off into the west, fanning themselves slowly.

"Say, we've got to have our ammunition all ready the next time they come," said Ralph. "I bet they're here this afternoon. They've never had any of these lover-like little attentions, apparently. And they're falling for them so quick that it's fairly embarrassing. Pete, you'll have to be muck-raking this island before we get through."

In their search for what Honey called "bait," they came across a trunk filled with scarfs of various descriptions; gauze, satin, chiffon; embroidered, sequined, fringed; every color, fabric, and decoration; every shape and size.

"Drummers' samples!" Honey commented.

"I tell you what we'll do now," Ralph suggested. "Put the first five scarfs on the beach where they can get them. But if they want any more, make them take them from our hands. Be careful, though, not to frighten them. One move in their direction and we'll undo everything we've accomplished."

As Ralph prophesied, the girls came again that day, but they waited until after sunset. It was full-moon night, however; the island was as white as day. They must have seen the gay-colored heaps from a distance; they pounced on them at once. The air resounded with cooings of delight. There was no doubt of it; the scarfs pleased them almost as much as the mirrors. Before the first flush of their delight had passed, Honey ran down the beach, bearing aloft a long, shimmering, white streamer. Ralph followed with a scarf of black and gold. Billy, Pete, and Frank joined them, each fluttering a brilliant silk gonfalon.

The girls drew away in alarm at first. They drew together for counsel. All the time the men stood quiet, waving their delicately hued spoils. One by one—Clara first, then Chiquita, Lulu, Peachy, Julia—they succumbed; they sank slowly. Even then they floated for a long while, visibly swinging between the desire for possession and the instinct of caution. But in the end each one of them took from her mate the scarf he held up to her. Followed the prettiest exhibition of flying that Angel Island had yet seen. The girls fastened the long gauzes to their heads and shoulders. They flicked and flitted and flittered, they danced and pirouetted and spun through the air, trailing what in the aqueous moonlight looked like mist, irradiated, star-sown.

"Well," said Ralph that night, after the girls had vanished, "I don't see that this business of handing out loot is getting us anywhere. We can keep this up until we've given those harpies every blessed thing in the trunks. Then where are we? They'll have everything we have to give, and we'll be no nearer acquainted. We've got to do something else."

"If we could only get them down to earth—if we could only accustom them to walking about," Honey declared, "I'm sure we could rig up some kind of trap."

"But you can't get them to do that," Billy said. "And the answer's obvious. They can't walk. You see how tiny and useless looking their feet are. They're no good to them, because they've never used

them. It never occurs to them, apparently, even to try to walk."

"Well, who would walk if he could fly?" demanded Pete pugnaciously.

"Well said, son," agreed Ralph, "but what are we going to do about it?"

"I'll tell you what we can do about it," said Frank quietly, "if you'll listen to me." The others turned to him. Their faces expressed varying emotions—surprise, doubt, incredulity, a great deal of amusement. But they waited courteously.

"The trouble has been heretofore," Frank went on in his best academic manner, "that you've gone at this problem in too obvious a way. You've appealed to only one motive—acquisitiveness. There's a stronger one than that—curiosity."

The look of politely veiled amusement on the four faces began to give way to credulity. "But how, Frank?" asked Billy.

"I'll show you how," said Frank. "I've been thinking it out by myself for over a week now."

There was an air of quiet certainty about Frank. His companions looked furtively at each other. The credulity in their faces changed to interest. "Go on, Frank," Billy said. They listened closely to his disquisition.

"What ever gave you that idea, Frank?" Billy asked at the end.

"The fact that I found a Yale spring-lock the other day," Frank answered quietly.

THE next morning, the men arose at sunrise and went at once to work. They worked together on the big cabin—the Clubhouse—and they dug and hammered without intermission all day long. Halfway through the morning, the girls came flying in a group to the beach. The men paid no attention to them. Many times their visitors flew up and down the length of the crescent of white, sparkling sand, each time dropping lower, obviously examining it for loot. Finding none, they flew in a body over the roof of the Clubhouse, each face turned disdainfully away. The men took no notice even of this.

The girls gathered together in a quiet group and obviously discussed the situation. After a little parley, they flew off. Later in the afternoon came Lulu alone. She hovered at Honey's shoulder, displaying all her little tricks of graceful flying; but Honey was obdurate. Apparently he did not see her.

Came Chiquita, floating lazily back and forth over Frank's head like a monstrous, deeply colored tropical bloom borne toward him on a breeze. She swam down close, floated softly, but Frank did not even look in her direction.

Came Peachy with such marvels of flying, such diving and soaring, such gyrating and flashing, that it took superhuman self-control not to drop everything and stare. But nobody looked or paused.

Came Clara, posturing almost at their elbows.

Came all save Julia, but the men ignored them equally.

"Gee," said Honey, after they had all disappeared, "that took the last drop of resolution in me. By Jove, you don't suppose they'll get sore and stay away for good?"

Frank shook his head.

Day by day the men worked on the Clubhouse; they worked their hardest from the moment of sunrise to the instant of sunset. It was a square building, big compared with the little cabins. They made a wide, heavy door at one end and long windows with shutters on both sides. These were kept closed.

"Only one more day's work," Frank said at the end of a fortnight, "and then—"

They finished the Clubhouse, as he prophesied, the next day.

"Now to furnish it," Frank said.

They put up rough shelves and dressing-tables. They put in chairs and hammocks. Then, working secretly at night when the moon was full, or in the morning just after sunrise—at any time during the day when the girls were not in sight—they transferred the contents of a half a dozen women's trunks to the Clubhouse. They hung the clothes conspicuously in sight; they piled many small toilet articles on tables and shelves; they placed dozens of mirrors about.

"It looks like a sale at the Waldorf," Honey said as they stood surveying the effect. "Tomorrow, we begin our psychological siege. Is that right, Frank?"

"Psychological siege is right," answered Frank with an unaccustomed gayety and an unaccustomed touch of slang.

In the meantime the girls had shown their pique at this treatment in a variety of small ways. Peachy and Clara made long detours around the island in the effort not to pass near the camp. Chiquita and Lulu flew overhead, but only in order to throw pebbles and sand down on the men while they were working.

Julia alone took no part in this feud. If she was visible at all, it was only as a glit-

tering speck in the far-off reaches of the blue sky.

The next time the four girls approached the island, the men arose immediately from their work. With an ostentatious carelessness, they went into the Clubhouse. With an ostentatious carefulness, they closed the door. They stayed there for three hours.

Outside, the girls watched this maneuver in visible astonishment. They drew together and talked it over, flew down close to the Clubhouse, flew about it in circles, examined it on every side, made even one perilous trip across the roof, the tips of their feet tapping it in vicious little dabs. But flutter as they would, jabber as they would, the Clubhouse preserved a tomblike silence. After a while they banged on the shutters and knocked against the door; but not a sound or movement manifested itself inside.

They flew away finally.

The next day the same thing happened —and the next—and the next.

But on the fourth day, something quite different occurred.

The instant the men saw the girls approaching, they carefully closed the door and windows of the Clubhouse, and then marched into the interior of the island. Close by the lake, there was a thick jungle of trees—a place where the branches matted together, in a roof-like structure, leaving a cleared space below. The men crawled into this shelter on their hands and knees for an eighth of a mile. They stayed there three hours.

The girls had followed this procession in an air-course that exactly paralleled the trail. When the men disappeared under the trees, they came together in a chattering group, obviously astonished, obviously irritated. Hours went by. Not a thing stirred in the jungle; not a sound came from it. The girls hovered and floated, dipped, dove, flew along the edge of the lake close to the water, tried by looking under the trees to get what was going on. It was useless.

Then they alighted on the tree-tops and swung themselves down from branch to branch until they were as near earth as they dared to come. Again they peered and peeped. And again it was useless. In the end, flying and floating with the disconsolate air of those who kill time, they frankly waited until the men emerged from the jungle. Then, again the girls took up the airy course that paralleled the trail to the camp.

For two weeks the men rigidly followed a program. Alternately they shut themselves inside the Clubhouse and concealed themselves in the forest. They stayed the same length of time in both places—never less than three hours. For two weeks, the girls rigidly followed a program. When the men retired to the Clubhouse, they spent the three hours hovering over it, sometimes banging viciously with feet and hands against the walls, sometimes dropping stones on the roof.

When the men retired to the jungle, they spent three hours beating about the branches of the trees, dipping lower and lower into the underbrush, taking, as time went on, greater and greater risks. But, as in both cases, the men were screened from observation, all their efforts were useless.

Finally came a day with a difference. The men retired to the forest as usual but, by an apparent inadvertence, they left the door of the Clubhouse open a crack.

AS usual, the girls followed the men to the lake, but this time there was a different air about them; they seemed to bubble with excitement. The men crawled under the underbrush and waited. The girls made a perfunctory search of the jungle and then, as at a concerted signal, they darted like bolts of lightning back in the direction of the camp.

"I think we've got them, boys," said Frank. There was a kind of Berserker excitement about him, a wild note of triumph in his voice and a white flare of triumph in his face. His breath came in excited gusts and his nostrils dilated under the strain.

"I'm sure of it," agreed Ralph. "And, by Jove, I'm glad. I've never had anything so get on my nerves as this chase." Ralph did, indeed, look worn. Haggard and wild-eyed, he was shaking under the strain.

"Lord, I'm glad—but, Lord, it's some responsibility," said Honey Smith. Honey was not white or drawn. He did not shake. But he had changed. Still radiantly youthful, there was a new look in his face—resolution.

"I feel like a mucker," groaned Billy. He lay face down on a heap of vines, his forehead pressed against the cool leaves. "But it is right," he added, as one arguing fiercely with himself. "It is right. There's no other way."

Pete was unshaven and the black shadow of his beard contrasted sharply with

the white set look in his face. "It's hell to live, isn't it?" he said. "But the worst of it is, we must live."

"Time's up." Frank breathed these words on the long gust of his outgoing breath. "Now, don't go to pieces. Remember, it must be done."

One behind the other, they crawled through the narrow tunnel that they had cut into the underbrush—found the trail. "Let's swim across the lake," Honey suggested; "I'm losing my nerve."

"Good idea," Billy said. They plunged into the water. Fifteen minutes later, they emerged on the other side, cool, composed, ready for anything.

The long trip back to the camp was taken almost in silence. Once in a while, a mechanical "That's a new bird, isn't it?" came from Billy and, a perfunctory "Look at that color," from Pete. Frank walked ahead. He towered above the others. He kept his eyes to the front. Ralph followed. At intervals, he pulled himself up and peered into the sky or dropped and tried to pierce the untranslatable distance; all this with the quiet, furtive, prowling movements of some predatory beast. Next came Honey, whistling under his breath and all the time whistling the same tune. Billy and Pete, walking side by side, tailed the procession. At times, those two caught themselves at the beginning of shuddering fits, but always by a supreme effort they managed to calm themselves.

They came finally to the point where the jungle-trail joined the sand-trail.

"There isn't one in sight," said Frank.

"They may have flown home," Honey said doubtfully.

"They're in the Clubhouse," said Ralph. And he burst suddenly into a long, wild cry of triumph. The cry was taken up in a faint shrill echo. From the distance came shrieks—women's voices—smothered.

"By God, we've got them," said Frank again.

And then a strange thing happened. Pete Murphy crooked his elbow up to his face and burst into hysterical weeping.

All this time, the men were moving swiftly toward the Clubhouse. As they approached, the sound inside grew in volume from a hum of terrified whisperings accented by drumming wings, to a pandemonium of cries and sobs and wails.

"They'll make a rush when we open the door, remember," Ralph reminded them. His eyes gleamed like a cat's.

"Yes, but we can handle them," said Frank. "There isn't much nerve left in them by this time."

"I say, boys, I can't stand this," burst out Billy. "Open the door and let them out."

Billy's words brought murmured echoes of approval from Pete and Honey.

"You've got to stand it," Frank said in a tone of command. He surveyed his mutinous crew with a stern look of authority.

"I can't do it," Honey admitted.

"I feel sick," Pete groaned.

Just then emerged from the pandemonium within another sound, curt and sharp-cut, the crash against the door of something heavy.

"That door won't stand much of that," Frank warned. "They'll get out before we know it."

The look of irresolution went like a flash from Billy's face, from Honey's, from Pete's. The look of the hunter took its place, keen, alert, determined, cruel.

"Keep close behind me," Frank ordered. "When I open the door, push in as quick as you can. They'll try to rush out."

Inside, the vibrant drumming kept up. Mixed with it came screams more sharp with terror. There came another crash.

Frank pounded on the door. "Stand back!" he called in a quiet tone of authority as if the girls could understand. He fitted the key to the lock, turned it, pulled the door open, leaped over the two broken chairs on the threshold. The others followed, crowding close.

The rush that they had expected did not come.

Apparently at the first touch on the door the girls had retreated to the farthest corner. They stood huddled there, gathered behind Julia. They stood close together, swaying, half supporting each other, their pinions dropped and trailing, their eyes staring black with horror out of their white faces.

Julia, a little in front, stood at defiance. Her wings, as though animated by a gentle voltage of electricity, kept lifting with a low purring whir. Halfway they struck the ceiling and dropped dead. The tiny silvery-white feathers near her shoulders rose like fur on a cat's back. One hand was clenched; the other grasped a chair. Her face was not terrified; neither was it white. It glowed with rage, as if a fire had been built in an alabaster vase.

All about on the floor, on chairs, over shelves lay the gauds that had lured them to their capture. Of them all, Julia alone showed no change. Below the scarlet drap-

eries swathing Chiquita's voluptuous outlines appeared the gold stockings and high-heeled gold slippers which she had tried on her beautiful Andalusian feet. Necklaces swung from her throat; bracelets covered her arms; rings crowded her fingers.

Lulu had thrown about her leafy costume an evening cape of brilliant blue brocade trimmed with ermine.

Over her mail of seaweed, Clara wore a mandarin's coat—yellow, with a decoration of tiny mirrors. Her hair was studded with jeweled hairpins, combs; a jeweled band.

Peachy had put on a pink chiffon evening gown, one shoulder-length, shining black glove, a long chain of fire-opals. Out of this emerged with an astonishing effect of contrast her gleaming pearly shoulders and her lustrous blue wings.

An instant the two armies stood staring at each other—at close terms for the first time. Then with one tremendous sweep of her arm, Julia threw something over their heads out the open door. It flashed through the sunlight like a rainbow rocket, tore the surface of the sea in a dazzle of sparks and colors.

"There goes five hundred thousand dollars," said Honey as the Wilmington "Blue" found its last resting-place. "Shut the door, Pete."

With another tremendous sweep of her magnificent arm, Julia lifted the chair, swung it about her head as if it were a whip, rushed—not running or flying, but with a movement that was both—upon the five men. Her companions seized anything that was near. Lulu wrenched a shelf from its fastenings.

The men closed in upon them.

Twenty minutes later, silence had fallen on the Clubhouse, a silence that was broken only by panted breathing. The five men stood resting. The five girls stood, tied to the walls, their hands pinioned in front of them. At intervals, one or the other of them would call in an agonized tone to Julia. And always she answered with words that reassured and calmed.

The room looked as if had housed a cyclone. The furniture lay in splinters; the feminine loot lay on the floor, trampled and torn.

"I'd like to sit down," Ralph admitted. It was the first remark that any one of the men had made. "Lucky they can't understand me. I'd hate them to know it, but I'm as weak as a cat."

"No sitting down, yet," Frank commanded, still in his inflexible tones of a disciplinarian. "Open the door, Pete—get some air in here!" He knelt before a sea-chest which filled one corner of the room, unlocked it, lifted the cover. The sunlight glittered on the contents.

"My God, I can't," said Billly.

"I feel like a murderer," said Pete.

"You've got to," Frank said in a tone growing more peremptory with each word. *"Now!"*

"That's right," said Ralph. "If we don't do it now, we'll never do it."

Frank handed each man a pair of shears.

"I sharpened them myself," he said briefly.

Heads over their shoulders, the girls watched. Did intuition shout a warning to them? As with one accord, a long wail arose from them, swelled to despairing volume, ascended to desperate heights.

"Now!" Frank ordered.

They had thought the girls securely tied.

Clara fought like a leopardess, scratching and biting.

Lulu struggled like a caged eagle, hysteria mounting in her all the time until the room was filled with her moans.

Peachy beat herself against the wall like a maniac. She shrieked without cessation. One scream stopped suddenly in the middle—Ralph had struck her on the forehead. For the rest of the shearing session she lay over a chair, limp and silent.

Chiquita, curiously enough, resisted not at all. She only swayed and shrugged, a look of a strange cunning in her long, deep, thick-lashed eyes. But of them all, she was the only one who attempted to comfort; she talked incessantly.

Julia did not move or speak. But at the first touch of the cold steel on her shoulders, she fainted in Billy's arms.

* * *

An hour later the men emerged from the Clubhouse.

"I'm all in," Honey muttered. "And I don't care who knows it. I'm going for a swim." Head down, he staggered away from the group and zigzagged over the beach.

"I guess I'll go back to the camp for a smoke," Frank said. "I never realized before that I had nerves." Frank was white, and he shook at intervals. But some strange spirit, compounded equally of a sense of victory and of defeat, flashed in his eyes.

"I'm going off for a tramp." Pete was sunken as well as ashen; he looked dead.

"Do you suppose they'll hurt themselves pulling against those ropes?" he asked tonelessly.

"Let them struggle for a while," Ralph advised. Like the rest of them, Ralph was exhausted-looking and pale. But at intervals he swaggered and glowed. With his strange, new air of triumph and his white teeth glittering through his dark mustache, he was more than ever like some huge predatory cat. "Serves them right! They've taken it out on us for three months."

Billy did not speak, but he swayed as he followed Frank. He fell on his bed when they reached the camp. He lay there all night motionless, staring at the ceiling.

There was a tiny spot of blood on one hand.

CHAPTER V

ANGELA

DAWN on Angel Island.

A gigantic rose bloomed at the horizon-line; half its satin petals lay on the iron sea, half on the granite sky. The gold-green morning star was fading slowly. From the island came a confusion of bird-calls.

Addington emerged from the Clubhouse. Without looking about him, he staggered down the path to the camp. The fire was still burning. The other men lay beside it, motionless, asleep with their clothes on. They waked as his footsteps drew near. Livid with fatigue, their eyelids dropping in spite of their efforts, they perked upright.

"How are they?" Billy asked.

"The turn has come," Ralph answered briefly. As he spoke he crumpled slowly into a heap beside the fire. "They're going to live."

The others did not speak; they waited.

"Julia did it. She had dozed off. Suddenly in the middle of the night, she sat upright. She was as white as marble but there was a light back of her face. And with all that wonderful hair falling down—she looked like an angel. She called to them one by one. And they answered her, one by one. You never heard—it was like little birds answering the mother-bird's call. At first their voices were faint and weak. But she kept encouraging them until they sat up—God, it was—"

Ralph could not go on for a while.

"She gave them a long talk—she was so weak—she had to keep stopping—but she went right on—and they listened. Of course I couldn't understand a word. But I knew what she said. In effect, it was, 'We cannot die. We must all live. We cannot leave any one of us here alone. Promise me that you will get well!' She pledged them to it. She made them take an oath, one after the other. Oh, they were obedient enough. They took it."

He stopped again.

"That talk made the greatest difference. After it was all over, I gave them some water. They were different even then. They looked at me—and they didn't shrink or shudder. When I handed Julia the cup, she made herself smile. God, you never saw such a smile. I nearly—" he paused. "I all but went back to the cabin and cut my throat. But the fight's over. They'll get well. They're sleeping like children now."

"Thank God!" Merrill groaned. "Oh, thank God!"

"I've felt like a murderer ever since—" Billy said. He stopped and his voice leaped with a sudden querulousness. "You didn't wake me up; you've done double guard duty during the night, Ralph."

"Oh, that's all right. You were all in—I felt that—" Ralph stammered in a shamefaced fashion. "And I knew I could stand it."

"There's a long sleep coming to you, Ralph," Pete said. "You've hardly closed your eyes this week. No question but you've saved their lives."

* *

Mid-morning on Angel Island.

The sun had mounted halfway to the zenith; sky and sea and land glittered with its luster. Like war horses, the waves came ramping over the smooth, shimmering sand; war horses with bodies of jade and manes of silver.

Pete floated inshore on a huge comber, ran up the beach a little way and sat down. Billy followed.

"I've come out just to get the picture," Pete explained.

"Same here," said Billy.

For an instant, both men contemplated the scene with the narrowed, critical gaze of the artist.

The flying girls were swimming; and swimming with the same grace and strength with which formerly they flew. And as if inevitably they must take on the quality of the element in which they mixed, they looked like mermaids now, just as formerly they had looked like birds. They

carried heads and shoulders high out of the water. Webs of seaspume glittered on the shining hair and on the white flesh. One behind the other, they swam in rhythmic unison. Regularly the long, round, strong-looking right arms reached out of the water, bowed forward, clutched at the wave, and pulled them on. Simultaneously, the left arms reached back, pushed against the wave, and shot them forward. Their feet beat the water to a lather.

They were headed down the beach, hugging the shore. Swim as hard as they could, Honey and Frank managed but to keep up with them. Ralph overtook them only in their brief resting-periods. Further inshore, carried ceaselessly a little forward and then a little back, Julia floated; floated with an unimaginable lightness and yet, somehow, conserved her aspect of a creature cut in marble.

"I have never seen anything so beautiful in any art, ancient or modern," Billy concluded. "When those strange draperies that they affect get wet, they look like the Elgin marbles."

"If we should take them to civilization," was Pete's answer, "the Elgin marbles would become a joke."

Billy spoke after a long silence. "It's been an experience that—if I were—oh, but what's the use? You can't describe it. The words haven't been invented yet. I don't mean the fact that we've discovered members of a lost species—the missing link between bird and man. I mean what's happened since the capture. It's left marks on me. I'll bear them until I die. If we abandoned this island—and them—and went back to the world, I could never be the same person. If I woke up and found it was a dream, I could never be the same person."

"I know," Pete said, "I know. I've changed, too. We all have. Old Frank is a god. And Honey's grown so that— Even Ralph's a different man. Changed—God, I should say I had. It's not only given me a new hold on things I thought I'd lost—morality, ethics, religion even—but it's developed something I have no word for—the fourth dimension of religion, faith."

"It's their weakness, I think, and their dependence." Now, it was less that Billy tried to translate Pete's thought and more that he endeavored to follow his own. "It puts it up to a man so. And their beauty and purity and innocence and simplicity—" Billy seemed to be ransacking his vocabulary for abstract nouns.

"And that sense you have," Pete broke in eagerly, "of molding a virgin mind. It gives you a feeling of responsibility that's fairly terrifying at times. But there's something else mixed up with it—the intsinct of the artist. It's as though you were trying to paint a picture on human flesh. You know that you're going to produce beauty." Pete's face shone with the look of creative genius. "The production of beauty excuses any methods, to my way of thinking," he spoke half to himself. "God knows," he added after a pause, "whatever I've done and been, I could never do or be again. Sometimes a man knows when he's reached the zenith of his spiritual development. I've reached mine. I think they're beginning to trust us," he added after another long interval, in which silently they contemplated the moving composition. Pete's tone had come back to its everyday accent.

"No question about it," Billy rejoined. "If I do say it as shouldn't, I think my scheme was the right one—never to separate any one of them from the others, never to seem to try to get them alone, and in everything to be as gentle as we could."

"That look is still in their eyes," Pete said. He turned away from Billy and his face contracted. "It goes through me like a knife— When that's gone—"

"It will go inevitably, Pete," Billy reassured him cheerfully. Suddenly his own voice lowered. "One queer thing I've noticed. I wonder if you're affected that way. I always feel as if they still had wings. What I mean is this. If I stand beside one of them with my eyes turned away I always get an impression that they're still there, towering above my head—ghosts of wings. Ever notice it?"

"Oh, Lord, yes!" Pete agreed. "Often, I hate it. But that will go, too. Here they come."

The bathers had turned; they were swimming up the beach. They passed Julia, who joined the procession, and turned toward the land. Stretched in a long line, they rode in on a big wave. Billy and Pete leaped forward. Assisted by the men, the girls tottered up the sand, gathered into a little group, talking among themselves. Their wet draperies clung to them in long, sweeping lines; but they dried with amazing quickness. The sun grew hotter and hotter. Their transient flash of animation died down; their conversation gradually stopped.

CHIQUITA settled herself flat on the sand, the sunlight pouring like a silver liquid into the blue-black masses of her

hair, her narrow brows, her thick eyelashes. Presently she fell asleep. Clara leaned against a low ledge of rock and spread her coppery mane across its surface. It dried almost immediately; she divided it into plaits and coils and wove it into an elaborate structure. Her fingers seemed to strike sparks from it; it coruscated.

Julia lay on her side, eyes downcast, tracing with one finger curious tangled patterns in the sand. Her hair blew out and covered her body as with a sliken, honey-colored fabric; the lines of her figure were lost in its abundance.

Peachy sat drooped over, her hand supporting her chin and her knees supporting her elbows, her eyes fixed on the horizon-line. Her hair dried, too, but she did not touch it. It flowed down her back and spread into a pool of gold on the sand. She might have been a mermaid cast up by that sea on which she gazed with such a tragic wistfulness—and forever cut off from it.

A little distance from the rest, Honey sat with Lulu. She was shaking the brown masses of her hair vigorously and Honey was helping her. He was evidently trying to teach her something because, over and over again, his lips moved to form two words, and over and over again, her red lips parted, mimicking them.

Gradually, Lulu lost all interest in her hair. She let it drop. It floated like a furry mantle over her shoulders. Into her little brown, pointed face came a look of overpowering seriousness, of tremendous concentration. Occasionally Honey would stop to listen to her; but invariably her recital sent him into peals of laughter. Lulu did not laugh; she grew more and more serious, more and more concentrated.

Honey arose after a long interval, strolled over to the main group.

"I think they're coming to the conclusion that we're regular fellows," he declared cheerfully. "Lulu doesn't jump or shiek any more when I run toward her."

"I'm going to begin reading aloud to them next week," Pete announced.

"It's curious how long it's taken them to get over that terror of us," said Billy.

"Oh, they'll explain why they've been so afraid," said Frank, "as soon as they've got enough vocabulary. We cannot know, until they tell us how many of their conventions we have broken, how brutal we may have seemed."

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"And yet," Billy went on, "I should think they'd see that we wouldn't do anything that wasn't for their own good. Well, just as soon as I can put it over with them, I'm going to give them a long spiel on the gentleman's code.

"But what I can't understand," Billy said, reverting to his thesis, "is that they don't realize instantly that we wouldn't hurt them for anything—that that's a thing a fellow couldn't do."

* * *

Twilight on Angel Island.

The stars were beginning to shoot tiny white, five-pointed flames through the purple sky. The fireflies were beginning to cut long arcs of gold in the sooty dusk. The waves were coming up the low-tide beach with a long roar and retreating with a faint hiss. Afterward floated on the air the music of the shingle, hundreds of pebbles pattering with liquid footsteps down the sand. Peals of laughter, the continuous bass roar of the men, an occasional uncertain soprano lilting of the women, came from the group. The girls were reciting their lessons.

"That's enough for lessons," Honey demanded. "Wait a moment!"

He rushed into the bushes and busied himself among the fireflies. The other four men, divining his purpose, joined him. They came back with handkerchiefs tied full of tiny, wriggling, fluttering green creatures.

In a few moments, the five women sat crowned with coronets of living fire.

"Now read us a story," Lulu begged.

Pete drew a little book from his pocket. Discolored and swollen, the print was big and still black.

"'Once upon a time,'" he began, "'there was a little girl who lived with her father and her stepmother—'"

"What's 'stepmother'?" Lulu asked.

Pete explained.

"'The stepmother had two daughters, and all three of these women were cruel and proud—'"

"What's 'cruel and proud'?" Chiquita asked.

Pete explained.

"'And so between the three the little girl had a very hard time. She worked like a slave all day long, and was never allowed to go out of the kitchen. The stepmother and the proud sisters used to go to balls every night, leaving the little girl alone. Because she was always so dusty and grimy from working over the fire, they called her Cinderella. Now, it happened that the country was ruled by a very handsome young prince—'"

"What's 'handsome young prince'?" Clara asked.

Pete explained.

"'And all the ladies of the kingdom were in love with him.'"

"What's 'in love'?" Peachy asked.

"Ah, that's a question," he said after an instant of meditation, "that will admit of *some* answer. Say, you fellers, you'd better come into this."

* * *

Moonlight on Angel Island.

The sea lay like a carpet of silver stretched taut from the white line of the waves to the black seam of the sky. The land lay like a crumpled mass of silver velvet, heaped to tinselled brightness here, hollowed to velvety shadow there. Over both arched the mammoth silver tent of the sky. In the cleft in the rock on the southern reef sat Julia and Billy. Under a tree at the north sat Peachy and Ralph. Scattered in shaded places between sat the others. The night was quiet; but on the breeze came murmurs sometimes in the man's voice, sometimes in the woman's. Fragmentary they were, these murmurs, and inarticulate; but their composite was ever the same.

* * *

Sunrise on Angel Island.

In and out among the trees, wound a procession following the northern trail. First came Lulu, white-clad, serious, pale, walking with Honey. The others, crowned with flowers and carrying garlands, followed, serious and silent, the women clinging with both hands to the men, who supported their snail-like, tottering progress with one arm about their waists. On the point of the northern reef, a cabin made of round beach-stones fronted the ocean. It fronted the rising sun now and a world, all ocean and sky, over which lay a rose dawnlight. Still silent, the procession paused and grouped about the house. Frank Merrill stepped forward and placed himself in front of Honey and Lulu.

"We are gathered this morning," Frank said in his deep academic voice, "to marry this man to this woman and this woman to this man. If there is any reason why you should not enter into the married state, pause before it is too late." His voice came to a full stop. He waited. "If

not, I pronounce you man and wife."

Silently still, the others placed their garlands and wreaths at the feet of the wedded pair. Turning, they walked slowly back over the trail.

* * *

Midnight on Angel Island.

Julia sat alone on the stone bench at the door of the Honeymoon House. She gazed straight ahead out on a star-lighted sea, which joined a star-lighted sky and stretched in pulsating star-gleams to the end of space. She gazed straight out, but apparently she saw nothing. Her eyes were abstracted and her brow furrowed. Her shoulders drooped.

A man came bounding up the path.

"Has Ralph been here?" he asked curtly. Billy's face was fiery. His eyes blazed.

"He's been here," Julia answered immediately. "He's gone!"

"By God, I'll kill him!" Billy turned white.

Julia's brow smoothed. She smiled a little. "No, you will not kill him," she said with her old serene air. "You will not have to kill him. He will never come again."

"Did he try to make love to you?"

"Yes."

"How did he justify himself?"

"He appealed to me to save him. I did not quite understand from what. He said I could make a better man of him." Julia laughed a little. "How did you know he was here?"

"I stopped at their cabin. He was not there. Peachy did not know where he was. Of course, I guessed at once. I came here immediately."

"Did Peachy seem troubled?"

"No. She doesn't care. Pete was there, examining her drawings. They're half in love with each other. And then again, Pete doesn't know, or if he does know, he doesn't care, that Clara is doing her damnedest to start a flirtation with Honey. And Lulu has walked about like a woman in a dream for weeks. What are we all coming to? There's nothing but flirting here!"

"It must be so," Julia said, "as long as men and women are idle."

"But how can we be anything but idle? There's nothing to do on this island."

"I don't know," said Julia slowly; "I don't know."

"Julia," Billy said in a pleading voice, "marry me!"

A strange expression came into Julia's eyes. Part of it was irresolution and part of it was terror. But a poignant wistful tenderness fused both these emotions, shot them with light.

"Not yet," she said in a terrified voice. "Not yet!"

"Why?"

"I don't know—why. Only that I cannot."

"Then, when will you marry me? Julia, I see all the others together and it— You don't know what it does to me."

"Yes, I know! It kills me too."

"Then why wait?"

"Because—" The poignant look went for an instant from Julia's eyes. A strange brooding came in its place. "Because a little voice inside says 'Wait!'"

"Julia, do you love me?"

Julia did not answer. She only looked at him.

"You are sure there is nobody else?"

"I am sure. There could never be anybody else—"

"It is forever, then?"

"Forever."

Billy sighed. "I'll wait, then—until eternity shrivels up."

They sat for a long time, silent.

"Here comes somebody," Billy said suddenly. "It's one of the girls," he added after a moment of listening. "I'll leave you, I guess."

He melted into the darkness.

A woman appeared, dragging herself along by means of the rail. It was Lulu, a strange Lulu, a Lulu pallid and silent, but a Lulu shining-eyed. She pulled herself over to Julia's side. "Julia! Julia! Oh, Julia!"

Lulu's voice was not voice. It was not speech. Liquid sound flowed from her lips, crystallizing at the touch of the air, to words. "Julia, I came to you first, after Honey. I wanted you to know."

"Oh, Lulu," Julia said, "not—"

Her eyes reflected the stars in Lulu's eyes. And there they stood, their two faces throwing gleam for gleam.

"Yes," said Lulu. Suddenly she knelt sobbing on the floor, her face in Julia's lap.

* * *

Mid-afternoon on Angel Island.

Four women sat in the Honeymoon House, sewing. Outside the world still lay in sunshine, the land cut by the beginning of shadow, the sea streaked with purple and green.

"Why didn't you bring the children?" Julia asked.

Lulu answered. "Honey and Frank were going in swimming this morning, and they said they'd take care of them. I'm glad to get Honey-Boy off my hands for an afternoon."

"And why hasn't Peachy come?" Julia asked.

"I stopped as I went by," Lulu explained. "Oh, Julia, I wish you didn't live way off here—it takes us an hour of crawling to pull ourselves along the path. Angela hadn't waked up yet. It was a longer nap than usual. Peachy said she'd come just as soon as she opened her eyes. I went in to look at her. Oh, she's such a darling, smiling in her sleep. Oh, I do hope I have a girl-baby sometime."

"I do, too," said Clara. "Peterkin's fun, of course. But I can't do the things for a boy that I could for a girl."

"I'd rather have boys," Chiquita said; "they're less trouble."

"Would you rather have boys or girls, Julia?" Lulu asked.

"Girls!" said Julia decisively. "A big family of girls."

"Then," Lulu began, and a question trembled in her bright eyes.

But, "Here's Peachy!" Julia exclaimed before she could go on.

Peachy came toiling up the path, pulling herself along, both hands on the wooden rail. She tottered, but in spite of her snail-like progress, it was evident that she hurried. A tiny bundle hung between her shoulders. It oscillated gently with her haste.

"Let me take Angela," Julia said as Peachy struggled over the threshold.

"Wait!" Peachy panted. She sank on a couch.

There was a strange element in her look, an overpowering eagerness. This eagerness had brimmed over into her manner; it vibrated in her trembling voice, her fluttering hands. She sat down. She reached up and lifted the baby from her shoulders to her lap. Angela still slept, a delicate bud of a girl-being. But Peachy gave her audience no time to study the sleeping face. She turned the baby over. She pulled the single light garment off. Then she looked up at the other women.

The little naked figure lay in the golden sunlight, translucent, like an angel carved in alabaster. But on the shoulder-blades lay shadow, deep shadow—no, not shadow, a fluff of feathery down.

"Wings!" Peachy said. "My little girl is going to fly!"

"Wings!" the others repeated after her. "Wings!"

And then the room seemed to fill with tears that ended in laughter, and laughter that ended in tears.

CHAPTER VI

REBELLION?

"THEY won't be home until very late tonight," announced Lulu. "The work they're doing now is hard and irritating and fussy. Honey says that they want to get through with it as soon as possible. He said they'd keep at it as long as the light lasted."

"It seems as if their working days grow longer all the time," Clara said petulantly. "They start off earlier and earlier in the morning and they stay later and later at night. And did you know that they are planning soon to stay a week at the New Camp—they say the walk back is so fatiguing after a long day's work."

The others nodded.

"And then the instant they've had their dinner," Lulu continued, "off they go to that tiresome Clubhouse—for tennis. It seems, somehow, as if I never had a chance to talk with Honey nowadays. I should think they'd get enough of each other, working side by side all day long, the way they do. But no! The moment they've eaten and had their smoke, they must get together again. Why is it, I wonder? I should think they would have said all they had to say in the daytime."

"Pete is worse than any of them," Clara went on. "After he comes back from the Clubhouse, he wants to sit up and write for an hour or two. Oh, I get fairly desperate sometimes, sitting there listening to the eternal scratching of his pen. I cannot understand his point of view, to save my life. If I talk, it irritates him. My very breathing annoys him; he cannot have me in the same room with him. But if I leave the cabin, he can't write a word.

"He wants me near, always. He says it's the knowing I'm there that makes him feel like writing. And then Sundays, if he isn't writing, he's painting. I don't mind his not being there in the daytime, in a way, because, of course, there's always Peterkin. But at night, when I've put Peterkin to bed I do want something different to happen. As it is, I have to make a scene to get up any excitement. I do it, too, without compunction. When it

gets to the point that I know I must scream or go crazy, I scream. And I do a good job in screaming, too."

"What would you like him to do, Clara?" Julia asked.

The petulant frown between Clara's eyebrows deepened. " I don't know," she said wearily. " I don't know what it is that I want to do; but I want to do something. Peterkin is asleep and perfectly safe—and I feel like going somewhere. Now, if I could fly, it would rest me so, to go for a long, long journey through the air." As she concluded, some new expression, some strange hardness of her maturity, melted; her face was for an instant the face of the old Clara.

Julia made no comment.

It was Chiquita who took it up.

"My husband talks enough. In fact, he talks all the time. But if I tire of his voice, I let myself fall asleep. He never notices. That is why I've grown so big. Sometimes"—discontent dulled for an instant the slow fire of her slumberous eyes—" sometimes my life seems one long sleep. If it weren't for Junior, I'd feel as if I weren't quite alive."

"Ralph talks a great deal," Peachy said listlessly. "By fits and starts, and he takes me out when he comes home, if he happens to feel like walking himself. He says, though, that it exhausts him having to help me along. But it isn't that I want particularly. Often I want to go out alone. I want to soar. The earth has never satisfied me. I want to explore the heights. I want to explore them alone, and I want to explore them when the mood seizes me. And I want to feel when I come back that I can talk about it or keep silent as he does. But I must make my discoveries and explorations in my own way. Ralph sometimes gives me long talks about astronomy—he seems to think that studying about the stars will quiet me. One little flight straight up would mean more to me than all that talk. Ralph does not understand it in me, and I cannot explain it to him.

"And yet he feels exactly that way himself—he's always going away by himself through unexplored trails on the island. But he cannot comprehend how I, being a woman, should have the same desire. Do you remember when our wings first began to grow strong and our people kept us confined, how we beat our wings against the wall—beat and beat and beat? At times now, I feel exactly like that. Why, sometimes I envy little Angela her wings."

The five women reclined on long, low rustic couches in the big, cleared half-oval that was the Playground for their children. It began—this half oval—in high land among the trees and spread down over a beach to the waters of a tiny cove. Between the high tapering boles of the pines at their back the sky dropped a curtain of purple. Between the long ledges of tawny rock in front the sea stretched a carpet of turquoise. And between pines and sea lay first a rusty mat of pine-needles, then a ribbon of purple stones, then a band of glittering sand. In the air the resinous smell of the pines competed with the salty tang of the ocean. High up, silver-winged gulls curved and dipped and called their creaking signals.

At the water's edge four children were playing.

Honey-Boy had waded out waist-deep. A sturdy, dark, strong-bodied, tiny replica of his father, he stood in an exact reproduction of one of Honey's poses, his arms folded over his little pouter-pigeon chest, lips pursed, brows frowning, dimples inhibited, gazing into the water. Just beyond, one foot on the bottom, Peterkin pretended to swim. Peterkin had an unearthly beauty that was half Clara's coloring—combination of tawny hair with gray-green eyes—and half Pete's expression—the look, doubly strange, of the Celt and the genius.

Slender and beautifully formed, graceful, he was in every possible way a contrast to virile little Billy-Boy; he was even elegant; he had the look of a story-book prince. Far up the beach, cuddled in a warm puddle, naked, sat a fat, red-headed baby, Frank Merrill, Junior. He watched the others intently for a while. Then breaking into a grin which neary bisected the face under the fiery thatch, he began an imitative paddle with his pudgy hands and feet.

Flitting hither and yon, hovering one moment at the water's edge and another at Junior's side, moving with a capricious will-o'-the-wisp motion that dominated the whole picture, flew Angela.

ANGELA was a being of faëry. Her single loose garment, serrated at the edges, knee-length, and armless, left slits at the back for a pair of wings to emerge. Tiny these wings were, and yet they were perfect in form; they soared above her head, soft, fine, shining, delicate as milkweed-down and of a white that was beginning, near the shoulders, to deepen to a pale

rose. Angela's little body was as slender as a flower-stem. Her limbs showed but the faintest of curves, her skin but the faintest of tints. Almost transparent in the sunlight, she had in the shadow the coloring of the opal, pale rose-pinks and pale violet-blues.

Her hair floated free to her shoulders; and that, more than any other detail, seemed to accent the quality of faëry in her personality. In calm it clung to her head like a pale-gold mist; in breeze it floated away like a pale-gold nimbus. It seemed as though a shake of her head would send it drifting off—a huge thistle-down of gold. Her eyes reflected the tint of whatever blue they gazed on, whether it was the frank azure of the sky or the mysterious turquoise of the sea. And yet their look was strangely intent. When she passed from shadow to sunshine, the light seemed to dissolve her hair and wing-edges, as though it were gradually taking her to itself.

"Oh, yes, Peachy," Lulu said, "Angela's wings must be a comfort to you. You must live it all over again in her."

"I do!" answered Peachy. "I do." There was tremendous conviction in her voice, as though she were defending herself from some silent accusation. "But it isn't the same. Besides, I want to fly with her."

The ripples in the cove grew to little waves, to big waves, to combers. The women talked and the children played. Honey-Boy and Peterkin waded out to their shoulders, dipped, and pretended to swim back. Angela flew out to meet a wave bigger than the others, balanced on its crest. Wings outspread, she fluttered back, descended when the crash came in a shower of rainbow drops. She dipped and rose, her feathers dripping molten silver, flew on to the advancing crest.

"Oh," Lulu sighed, "I do want a little girl. I threatened if this one was a boy to drown it." "This one" proved to be a bundle lying on the pine-needles at her side. The bundle stirred and emitted a querulous protest. She picked it up and it proved to be a baby, just another sturdy little dark creature as Honey-Boy must have been. "Your mother wouldn't exchange you for a million girls now," Lulu addressed him fondly. "I pray every night, though, that the next one will be a girl."

"I want a girl, too," Clara remarked. "Well, we'll see next spring." Clara had not been happy at the prospect of her first maternity, but she was jubilant over her second.

"It will be nice for Angela, too," Peachy said, "to have some little girl to play with. Come, baby!" she called in a sudden access of tenderness.

Angela flew down from the tip of a billow, came fluttering and flying up the beach. Once or twice, for no apparent reason, her wings fell dead, sagged for a few moments; then her little pink, shell-like feet would pad helplessly on the sand. Twice she dropped her pinions deliberately; once to climb over a big root, once to mount a boulder that lay in her path.

"Don't walk, Angela!" Peachy called sharply at these times. "Fly! Fly!" And obediently, Angela stopped, waited until the strength flowed into her wings, started again. She reached the group of mothers, not by direct flight, but a complicated method of curving, arching, dipping, and circling. Peachy arose, balanced herself, caught her little daughter in midair, kissed her.

The women handed her from one to the other, petting and caressing her.

Julia received her last. She sat with Angela in the curve of her arm, one hand caressing the drooped wings. It was like holding a little wild bird. With every breeze, Angela's wings opened. And always, hands, feet, hair, feathers fluttered with some temperamental unrest.

The boys, tiring of the waves, came scrambling in their direction. Half-way up the beach, they too came upon the boulder in the path. It was too high and smooth for them to climb, but they immediately set themselves to do it. Peterkin pulled himself half-way up, only immediately to fall back. Junior stood for an instant imitatively reaching up with his baby hands, then, abandoning the attempt, waddled off after a big butterfly. Honey-Boy slipped and slid to the ground, but he was up in an instant and at it again.

Angela fluttered with baby-violence. Julia opened her arms. The child leaped from her lap, started half-running, half-flying, caught a seaward-going breeze, sailed to the top of the boulder. She balanced herself there, gazing triumphantly down on Billy-Boy who, flat on his stomach, red in the face, his black eyes bulging out of his head, still pulled and tugged and strained.

"Honey-Boy's tried to climb that rock every day for three months," Lulu boasted proudly. "He'll do it some day. I never saw such persistence. If he gets a thing into his head, I can't do anything with him."

She lay there, as she had fallen, caught in one of the topmost boughs of a high tree.

"Angela starts to climb it occasionally," Peachy said. "But, of course, I always stop her. I'm afraid she'll hurt her feet."

Above the rock stretched the bough of a big pine. As she contemplated it, a look of wonder grew in Angela's eyes, of question, of uncertainty. Suddenly it became resolution. She spread her wings, bounded into the air, fluttered upward, and alighted squarely on the bough.

"Oh, Angela!" Peachy called anxiously. Then, joyously, "Look at my baby. She'll be flying as high as we did in a few years. Oh, how I love to think of that!"

She laughed in glee—and the others laughed with her. They continued to watch Angela's antics, their faces growing more and more gay. Julia alone did not smile; but she watched the exhibition none the less steadily.

THREE years had brought some changes to the women of Angel Island; and for the most part they were devastating changes. They were still wingless. They wore long trailing garments that concealed their feet. These garments differed in color and decoration, but they were alike in one detail—floating, wing-like draperies hung from the shoulders.

Chiquita had grown so large as to be almost unwieldy. But her tropical coloring retained its vividness, retained its breath-taking quality of picturesqueness, retained its alluring languor. She sat now holding a huge fan. Indeed, since that day that Honey had piled the fans on the beach, Chiquita had never been without one in her hand. Scarlet, the scarlet of her lost pinions, seemed to be her color. Her gown was scarlet.

Lulu had not grown big, but she had grown round. That primitive woman which had made her strange, had softened and sobered. Her face was the face of a happy woman. The maternal look in her eyes was duplicated by the married look in her figure. She was always busy. Even now, though she chattered, she sewed; her little fingers fluttered like the wings of an imprisoned bird. Indeed, she looked like a little sober mother-bird in her gray and brown draperies. She was the best housewife among them. Honey lacked no creature comfort.

Clara also had filled out; in figure, she had improved; her elfin thinness had become slimness, delicately curved and subtly contoured. Also her coloring had deepened; she was like a woman cast in gold. But her expression was not pleasant. Her light, gray-green eyes had a petulant look; her thin, red lips a petulant droop. She was restless; something about her moved always. Either her long slender fingers adjusted her hair or her long slender feet beat a tattoo. And ever her figure shifted from one fluid pose to another.

She wore jewels in her elaborately arranged hair, jewels about her neck, on her wrists, on her fingers. The green draperies were embroidered in beads. She was, in fact, always dressed, costumed is perhaps the most appropriate word. She dressed Peterkin picturesquely too; she was always studying the illustrations in their few books for ideas. Clara was one of those women at whom instinctively other women gaze—and gaze always with a question in their eyes.

Peachy was at the height of her blond bloom; all pearl and gold, all rose and aquamarine. But something had gone out of her face—brilliance. And something had come into it—pathos. The look of a mischieveous boy had turned to a wild gipsy look of strangeness, a look of longing mixed with melancholy. In some respects there was more history written on her than on any of the others. But it was tragic history.

At Angela's birth Peachy had gone insane. There had come times when for hours she shrieked or whispered, "My wings! My wings! My wings!" The devoted care of the other four women had saved her; she was absolutely normal now. Her figure still carried its suggestion of a potential, young-boy-like strength, but maternity had given a droop, exquisitely feminine, to the shoulders. She always wore blue—something that floated and shimmered with every move.

Julia had changed little; for in her case, neither marriage nor maternity had laid its transmogrifying touch upon her. Her deep blue-gray eyes—of which the brown-gold lashes seemed like reeds shadowing lonely lakes—had turned as strange as Peachy's; but it was a different strangeness.

Her mouth—that double sculpturesque ripple of which the upper lip protruded an infinitesimal fraction beyond the lower one—drooped like Clara's; but it drooped with a different expression. She had the air of one who looks ever into the distance and broods on what she sees there. Perhaps because of this, her voice had deepened to a thrilling intensity. Her hair was pulled straight back to her neck from the perfect oval of her face. It hung in a single, honey-colored braid, and it hung to

the very ground. She always wore white.

"Do you remember"—Chiquita began presently. Her lazy purring voice grew soft with tenderness. The dreamy, unthinking Chiquita of four years back seemed suddenly to peer through the unwieldy Chiquita of the present— "how we used to fly—and fly—and fly—just for the love of flying? Do you remember the long, bright day-flyings and the long, dark night-flyings?"

"And sometimes how we used to drop like stones until we almost touched the water," Lulu said, a sparkle in her cooing friendly little voice. "And the races! Oh, what fun! I can feel the rush of air now."

"Over the water." Peachy flung her long, slim arms upward and a delicious smile sent the tragedy scurrying from her sunlit face. "Do you remember how wonderful it was at sunset? The sky heaving over us, shot with gold and touched with crimson. The sea pulsing under us lined with crimson and splashed with gold. And then the sunset ahead—the gold and crimson hole in the sky. We used to think we could fly through it some day and come out on another world. And sometimes we could not tell where sea and sky joined.

"How we flew—on and on—farther each time—on and on—and on. The risks we took! Sometimes I used to wonder if we'd ever have the strength to get home. Yet I hated to turn back. I hated to turn away from the light. I never could fly towards the east at sunset, nor towards the west at sunrise. It hurt! I used to think, when my time came to die, that I would fly out to the sea—on and on till I dropped."

"I LOVED it most at noon," Chiquita said, "when the air was soft. It smelled sweet; a mixture of earth and sea. I used to drift and float on great seas of heat until I almost slept. That was wonderful; it was like swimming in a perfumed air or flying in a fragrant sea."

"Oh, but the storms, Julia!" Lulu exclaimed. A wild look flared in her face, wiped off entirely its superficial look of domesticity. "Do you remember the heavy, night-black cloud, the thunder that crashed through our very bodies, the lightning that nearly blinded us, and the rain that beat us almost to pieces?"

"Oh, Lulu!" Julia said; "I had forgotten that. You were wonderful in a storm. How you used to shout and sing and leap through the air like a wild thing! I used to love to watch you; and yet I was always afraid that you would hurt yourself."

"I loved the moonlight most. I do now." The petulance went out of Clara's eyes; dreams came into its place. "The cool softness of the air, the brilliant sparkle of the stars! And then the magic of the moonlight! Young child-moon, half-grown girl-moon, voluptuous woman-moon, sallow, old-hag-moon, it was alike to me. Pete says I'm 'fey' in the moonlight. He says I'm Irish then."

"I loved the sunrise," said Julia. "I used to steal out, when you girls were still sleeping, to fly by dawn. I'd go up, up, up. At first, it was like a huge dewdrop—that morning world—then, colder and colder—it was like a melted iceberg. But I never minded that cold and I loved the clearness. It exhilarated me. I used to run races with the birds. I was not happy until I had beaten the highest-flying of them all. Oh, it was so fresh and clean then. The world seemed new-made every morning. I used to feel that I'd caught the moment when yesterday became to-day. Then I'd sink back through layer on layer of sunlight and warm, perfume-laden, dew-damp breezs, down, down until I fell into my bed again.

"And all the time the world grew warmer and warmer. And I loved almost as well that instant of twilight when the world begins to fade. I used to feel that I'd caught the moment when to-day had become to-morrow. I'd fly as high as I could go then, too. Then I'd sink back through layer on layer of deepening dusk, while one by one the stars would flash out at me—down, down, down until my feet touched the water. And all the time the air grew cooler and cooler."

"My wings! My wings!" Peachy did not shriek these words with maniacal despair. She did not whisper them with dreary resignation. She breathed them with the rapture of one who looks through a narrow, dark tunnel to measureless reaches of sun-tinted cloud and sea.

"Do you remember the first time we ever saw them?" Lulu asked after a long time. This was obviously a deliberate harking back to lighter things. A gleam of reminiscence, both mischievous and tender, fired her slanting eyes.

The others smiled, too. Even Peachy's face relaxed from the look of tension that had come into it. "I often think that was the happiest time," she sighed, "those weeks before they knew we were here. At least, they knew and they didn't know. Ralph said that they all suspected that something curious was going on—but that

they were so afraid that the others would joke about it, that no one of them would mention what was happening to him."

"Do you remember," Clara took it up, "that we even considered kidnaping one of them? If we'd known what to do with him, I think we might have tried it."

"Yes," said Chiquita. "But I think it was just as well we didn't. We wouldn't have carried it off well. There's something about them that's terrifying. Do you remember that time we saved Honey from the shark, how we trembled all the time we carried him through the air. He knew it, too—I noticed how triumphantly he smiled."

"Honey told me once" —Lulu lowered her voice— "that it was the fact that we trembled—that we seemed so much women, in spite of being creatures of the air—that made him determine to capture us."

"Well, there's something about them that weakens you," Chiquita said in a puzzled tone. "It's like a spell. At first I always felt quivery and trembly if I stood near them."

"It's power," Julia explained.

"I used even to be afraid of their voices," Chiquita went on.

"Oh, so was I," Lulu agreed. "I felt as I did when I heard thunder for the first time. It went through me. It make me shake. I was afraid, but I wanted to hear it again."

"DO YOU remember the first time we saw them *walk!*" Clara said. Her face twisted with the expression of a past loathing. "How it disgusted us! It seemed to me the most hideous motion I had even seen—so unnatural, so ungraceful, so repellent. It took me a long time to get used to that. And as for their running—"

"It's curious how that feeling still lingers in us," exclaimed Peachy. "That contempt for the thing that walks. Occasionally Angela starts to imitate the boys—it seems as if I would fly out of my skin with horror. I shall always feel superior to Ralph, I know."

"Do you remember the first talks we ever had after we'd got our first glimpse of them?" asked Clara. "How astonished we were—and half frightened and yet—in a queer way—excited and curious?"

"And after we got over our fright," Lulu carried the memories along, "and had made up our minds we didn't care whether they discovered us or not, what fun we had with them! How we played over the entire island and yet it took them such a long time to discover us."

"Oh, they're awfully stupid about seeing or guessing things," Peachy said disdainfully. "My mind always leaps way ahead of Ralph's."

"Do you remember that at first we used to have regular councils," Lulu asked, "Before—before—"

"Before we agreed each to go her own way," Peachy finished for her.

"All of us pitted against you, Julia." Chiquita sighed. "I often think now, Julia, how you used to talk to us. How you used to beg us not to go to the island. How you argued with us! The prophecies you made! They've all come true. I can hear you now! 'Don't go to the island.' 'Come away with me and we will fly back south before it is too late.' 'Come away while you can!' 'In a little while it will be too late.' 'In a little while I shall not be able to help you!'"

"And how we fought you, Julia!" Clara said. "How we denied everything you said, every one of us knowing in her heart that you were right!"

"But," Julia said, "later, I told you that I might not be able to help myself, and you see I wasn't."

"Did they ever guess that we had quarreled, I wonder?" Clara asked.

"Yes," Lulu answered eagerly. "Honey guessed it. Now, wasn't that clever of him?"

"Not so very," Clara replied languidly. "I guessed that *they* had quarreled. And I had a strong suspicion," she added, "that it was about us."

"I wonder," Peachy said somberly, "what would have happened if we had taken Julia's advice."

"Are you sorry, Peachy?" Julia asked.

"No, I'm not sorry exactly," Peachy answered slowly. "I have Angela, of course. Are you sorry, Julia?"

"No," replied Julia.

"Julia," Peachy said, "what was it changed you? I have always wanted to ask but I have never dared. What brought you to the island finally? What made you give up the fight with us?"

The far-away look in Julia's eyes grew if possible, more far-away. She did not speak for a while. Then, "I'll tell you," she said simply. "It is something that I have never told anybody but Billy. When you first began to leave me to come to this island alone, I was very unhappy. And I grew more and more unhappy. I missed flying with you. And especially flying by night. Flying alone seemed melancholy. I came here at first, only because I was driven by my loneliness.

"I said to myself that I'd drift with the current. But that did not help any. You were all so interested in your lovers that it made no difference whether I was with you or not. I began to think that you no longer cared for me, that you had outgrown me, that all my influence over you had vanished, that, if I were out of the way, the one tie which held you to me would break and you would go to these men. I grew more and more unhappy every instant. That was not all. I was in love with Billy, but I did not know it. I only knew that I was moody and strange and in desperate despair. And, so, one day I decided to kill myself."

There was a faint movement in the group, but it was only the swish of draperies as the four recumbent women came upright. They stared at Julia. They did not speak. They seemed scarcely to breathe.

"One day, I flew up and up. Never before had I gone half so high. But I flew deliberately higher and higher until I became cold and colder and numb and frozen—until my wings stopped. And then—" She paused.

"What happened?" Clara asked breathlessly.

"I dropped. I dropped like a stone. But—but—the instant I let myself go, something strange happened—a miracle of self-revelation. I knew that I loved Billy, that I could not live in any world where he could not come to me. And the instant that I realized that I loved him, I knew also that I could not die. I tried to spread my wings but they would not open. It was terrific. And that sense of despair, that my wings which had always responded—would not—now—oh, that was hell.

"How I fought! How I struggled! It was as though iron bands were about me. I strained. I tore. Of course, all this was only a moment. But one thinks a million things in a moment like that—one lives a thousand years. It seemed an eternity. At last my wings opened and spread. They held. I floated until I caught my breath. Then I dropped slowly. I threw myself over the bough of a tree. I lay there."

There was an interval of intense silence.

"Did you faint?" Peachy asked in an awed voice.

"I wept."

"You *wept*, Julia?" Peachy said. *"You!"*

"I had not wept since my childhood. It was strange. It frightened me almost as much as the fall. Oh, how fast the tears came—and in such floods! Something melted and went away from me then. A softness came over me. It was like a spell. I have never been the same creature since. I cry easily now."

"Did you tell Billy?" Clara asked.

"He saw me," Julia answered.

"He saw—" It came from her four listeners as from one woman.

"That's what changed him. That's what determined him to help capture us. He said that he was afraid I would try it again. I wouldn't have, though."

NOBODY spoke for a long time.

"Julia!" It was Chiquita who broke the silence this time. "There is something I, too, have always wanted to ask you. But I have never dared before. What was it tempted you to go into the Clubhouse that day? At first you tried to keep us from going in. You never seemed to care for any of the things they gave us. You threw away the fans and the slippers and the scarfs. And you smashed your mirror."

"Billy asked me this same question once," Julia answered. "It was that big diamond—the Wilmington 'Blue.' I caught a glimpse of it through the doorway as it lay all by itself on the table, flashing in the sunlight. I had never before in my life seen any *thing* that I really wanted. But this was so exquisite, so chiseled, so tiny, so perfect. There was so much fire and color in it. It seemed like a living creature. I was enchanted by it. When I

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told Billy, he laughed. He said that the lust for diamonds was a recognized earth-disease among earth-people, especially earth-women.

"He said that many women had been ruined by it. He said that it was a common saying among men that you could catch any woman in a trap baited with diamonds. I have never got over the sting of that. I blush always when I think of it. Because—although I don't exactly understand why—it was not quite true in my case. That is a thing which always bothers me in conversation with the men. They talk about us as if they knew all about us. You'd think they'd invented us. Not that we're not simple enough. We're perfectly simple, but they've never bothered to study us.

"They say so many things about us, for instance, that are only half true—and yet I don't know exactly how to confute them. None of us would presume to say such things about them. I'm glad," she ended with a sudden fierceness, "that I threw the diamond away."

"Julia," and now it was Lulu who questioned, "why do you not marry Billy when you love him so?" The seriousness of her tone, the warmth of affection in her little brown face robbed this question of any appearance of impertinence.

"Lulu," Julia answered simply, "I don't know why. Only that something inside has always said, 'Wait!'"

"Well, you did well," Peachy said bitterly, "for, at least, Billy loves you just as much as at first. I don't see him racing over to the Clubhouse the moment his dinner is eaten. I don't see him spending his Sundays in long exploring trips. I don't see him making plans to go off into the interior for a week at a time."

"But he would be just like all the others, Julia," Clara exclaimed carefully, "if you'd married him. Keep out of it as long as you can!"

"Don't ever marry him, Julia," Chiquita warned. "Keep your life a perpetual wooing."

"Marry him to-morrow, Julia," Lulu advised. "Oh, I cannot think what my life would have been without Honey-Boy and Honey-Bunch."

"I shall marry Billy sometime," Julia said. "But I don't know when. When that little inner voice stops saying, 'Wait!'"

"I wonder," Peachy questioned again, "what would have happened if—"

"It would have come out just the same way. Depend on that!" Chiquita said philosophically. "It was our fate—the Great Doom that our people used to talk of. And, after all, it's our own fault. Come to this island we would and come we did! And this is the end of it—we—*we* sit moveless from sun-up to sun-down, we who have soared into the clouds. But there is a humorous element in it. And if I didn't weep, I could laugh myself mad over it. We sit here helpless and watch these creatures who *walk* desert us daily—desert us—creatures who flew—leave us here helpless and alone."

"But in the beginning," Lulu interposed anxiously, "they did try to take us with them. But it tired them so to carry us—for that's what in effect they do."

"And there was one time just after we were married when it was all wonderful," said Peachy. "I did not even miss the flying, for it seemed to me that Ralph made up for the loss of my wings by his love and service. Then, they began to build the New Camp and gradually everything changed. You see, they love their work more than they do us. Or at least it seems to interest them more."

"Why not?" Julia interpolated quietly. "We're the same all the time. We don't change and grow. Their work does change and grow. It presents new aspects every day, new questions and problems and difficulties, new answers and solutions and adjustments. It makes them think all the time. They love to think." She added this as one who announces a discovery, long pondered over. "They enjoy thinking."

"Yes," Lulu agreed wonderingly, "that's true, isn't it? That never occurred to me. They really do like thinking. How curious! I hate to think."

"I never think," Chiquita announced.

"I won't think," Peachy exclaimed passionately. "I *feel*. That's the way to live."

"I don't have to think," Clara declared proudly. "I've something better than thought—instinct and intuition."

Julia was silent.

"Julia is like them," Lulu said, studying Julia's absent face tenderly. "She likes to think. It doesn't hurt, or bother, or irritate, or tire—or make her look old. It's as easy for her as breathing. That's why the men like to talk to her."

"Well," Clara remarked triumphantly, "I don't have to think in order to have the men about me. I'm very glad of that."

This was true. The second year of their stay in Angel Island, the four women had rebuked Clara for this tendency to keep men about her—without thinking.

"It is not necessary for us to think," said Peachy with a sudden, spirited lift of her head from her shoulders. The movement brought back some of her old-time vivacity and luster. Her thick, brilliant, springy hair seemed to rise a little from her forehead. And under her draperies that which remained of what had once been wings stirred faintly. "They must think just as they must walk because they are earth-creatures. They cannot exist without infinite care and labor. We don't have to think any more than we have to walk; for we are air-creatures. And air-creatures only fly and feel. We are superior to them."

"Peachy," Julia said again. Her voice thrilled as though some thought, long held quiescent within her, had burst its way to expression. It rang like a bugle. It vibrated like a violin-string. "That is the mistake we've made all our lives; a mistake that has held us here tied to this camp for four years—the idea that we are superior in some way, more strong, more beautiful, more good than they. But think a moment! Are we? True, we are as you say, creatures of the air. True, we were born with wings. But didn't we have to come down to the earth to eat and sleep, to love, to marry, and to bear our young? Our trouble is that—"

And just then, "Here they come!" Lulu cried happily.

LULU'S eyes turned away from the group of women. Her brown face had lighted as though somebody had placed a torch beside it. The strings of little dimples that her plumpness had brought in its wake played about her mouth.

The trail that emerged from the jungle ran between bushes, and gradually grew lower and lower, until it merged with a path shooting straight across the sand to the Playground.

For a while the heads of the file of men appeared above the bushes; then came shoulders, waists, knees; finally the entire figures. They strode through the jungle with the walk of conquerors.

They were so absorbed in talk as not to realize that the camp was in sight. Every woman's eye—and some subtle revivifying excitement temporarily dispersed the discontent there—had found her mate long before he remembered to look in her direction.

The children heard the voices and immediately raced, laughing and shouting, to meet their fathers. Angela, beating her pinions in a very frenzy of haste, arrived first. She fluttered away from outstretched arms until she reached Ralph; he lifted her to his breast, carried her snuggled there, his lips against her hair. Honey and Pete absently swung their sons to their shoulders and went on talking. Junior, tired out by his exertions, sat down plumply halfway. Grinning radiantly, he waited for the procession to overtake him.

"Peachy," Julia asked in an aside, "have you ever asked Ralph what he intends to do about Angela's wings?"

"What he intends to do?" Peachy echoed. "What do you mean? What can he intend to do? What has he to say about them, anyway?"

"He may not intend anything," Julia answered gravely. "Still, if I were you, I'd have a talk with him."

Time had brought its changes to the five men as to the five women; but they were not such devastating changes.

Honey led the march, a huge wreath of uprooted blossoming plants hanging about his neck. He was at the prime of his strength, the zenith of his beauty and, in the semi-nudity that the climate permitted, more than ever like a young wood-god. Health shone from his skin in a copper-bronze that seemed to overlay the flesh like armor. Happiness shone from his eyes in a fire-play that seemed never to die down. One year more and middle age might lay its dulling finger upon him. But now he positively flared with youth.

Close behind Honey came Billy Fairfax, still shocked-headed, his blond hair faded to tow, slimmer, more serious, more fine. His eyes ran ahead of the others, found Julia's face, lighted up. His gaze lingered there in a tender smile.

Just over Billy's shoulder, Pete appeared, a Pete as thin and nervous as ever, the incipient black beard still prickling in tiny ink-spots through a skin stained a deep mahogany. There was some subtle change in Pete that was not of the flesh but of the spirit. Perhaps the look in his face—doubly wild of a Celt and of a genius—had tamed a little. But in its place had come a question: undoubtedly he had gained a spiritual dignity and in humorous quality.

Ralph Addington followed Pete. And Ralph also had changed. True, he retained his inalienable air of elegance, an elegance a little too sartorial. And even after six years of the jungle, he maintained his picturesqueness. Long-haired,

liquid-eyes, still with a beard symmetrically pointed and a mustache carefully cropped, he was more than ever like a young girl's idea of an artist. And yet something different had come into his face. The slight touch of gray in his wavy hair did not account for it; nor the lines, netting delicately his long-lashed eyes. The eyes themselves bore a baffled expression, half of revolt, half of resignation; as one who has at last found the immovable obstacle, who accepts the situation even while he rebels against it.

At the end of the line came Merrill, a doubly transformed man, looking at the same time younger and handsomer. Bigger and even more muscular than formerly, his eyes were wide open and sparkling, his mouth had lost its rigidity of contour. His look of severity, of asceticism had vanished. Nothing but his classic regularity remained and that had been beautifully colored by the weather.

THE five couples wound through the trail which led from the Playground to the Camp, the men half-carrying their wives with one arm about their waists and the other supporting them.

The Camp had changed. The original cabins had spread by an addition of one or two or three to sprawling bungalow size. Not an atom of their wooden structure showed. Blocks of green, cubes of color, only open doorways and windows betrayed that they were dwelling-places. A tide of tropical jungle beat in waves of green with crests of rainbow up to the very walls. There it was met by a backwash of the vines which embowered the cabins, by a stream of blossoms which flooded and cascaded down their sides.

The married ones stopped at the Camp. But Billy and Julia continued up the beach.

* * *

"How did the work go to-day, Honey?" Lulu asked in a perfunctory tone as they moved away from the Playground.

"Fine!" Honey answered enthusiastically. "You wait until you see Recreation Hall." He stopped to light his pipe. "Lord, how I wish I had some real tobacco! It's going to be a corker. We've decided to enlarge the plan by another three feet."

"Have you really?" commented Lulu. "Dear me, you've torn your shirt again."

"Yes," said Honey, puffing violently, "a nail. And we're going to have a tennis court at one side—not a little squeezed-up affair like this—but a big, fine one. We're going to lay out a golf course, too. That will be some job, Mrs. Holworthy D. Smith, and don't you forget it."

"Yes, I should think it would be," agreed Lulu. "Do you know, Honey, Clara's an awful cat! She's dreadfully jealous of Peachy. The things she says to her! She knows Pete's still half in love with her. Peachy understands him on his art side as Clara can't. Clara simply hands it to Pete if he looks at Peachy. Even when she knows that he knows, that we all know, that she tried her best to start a flirtation with you."

"And to-day," Honey interrupted eagerly, "we doped out a scheme for a series of canals to run right round the whole place—with gardens on the bank. You see we can pipe the lake water and—"

"That will be great," said Lulu, but there was no enthusiasm in her tone. "And really, Honey, Peachy's in a dreadful state of nerves. Of course, she knows that Ralph is still crazy about Julia and always will be, just because Julia's like a stone to him—oh, you know the kind of a man Ralph is. The only woman you can depend on him to be faithful to is the one that won't have him round. I don't think that bothers Peachy, though. She adores Julia. If she could fly a little while in the afternoon—an hour, say—I know it would cure her."

"Too bad. But, of course, we couldn't let you girls fly again. Besides, I doubt very much if, after so many cuttings, your wings would ever grow big enough. You don't realize it yourself, perhaps, but you're much more healthy and normal without wings."

"I don't mind being without them so much myself"—Lulu's tone was a little doubtful—"though I think they would help me with Honey-Boy and Honey-Bunch. Sometimes—" She did not finish.

"And then," Honey went on decidedly, "it's not natural for women to fly. God never intended them to."

"It is wonderful," Lulu said admiringly, "how men know exactly what God intended."

Honey roared. "If you'd ever heard the term *sarcasm*, my dear, I should think you were slipping something over on me. In point of fact, we don't know what God intended. Nobody does. But we know better than you; the man's life broadens us."

"Then I should think—" Lulu began. But again she did not finish.

"We're going to make a tower of rocks on the central island of the lake," Honey

went on. "We'll drag the stones from the beach—those big, beauty round ones. When it's finished, we're going to cover it with that vine which has the scarlet, butterfly flowers. Pete says the reflections in the water will be pretty neat."

"Really. It sounds charming. And, Honey, Chiquita is so lazy. Little Junior runs wild. He's nearly two and she hasn't made a strip of clothing for him yet. It's Frank's fault, though. He never notices anything. I really think you men ought to do something about that."

"And then," Honey went on. But he stopped. "What's the use?" he muttered under his breath. He subsided, enveloped himself in a cloud of smoke and listened, half-amused, half-irritated, to Lulu's pauseless, squirrel-like chatter.

* * *

"My dear," Frank Merrill said to Chiquita after dinner, "the New Camp is growing famously. Six months more and you will be living in your new home. The others—Pete especially—are very much interested in Recreation Hall. They have just worked out a new scheme for parks and gardens. It is very interesting, though purely decorative. It offers many absorbing problems. But, for my own part, I must confess I am more interested in the library. It will be most gratifying to see all our books ranged on shelves, classified and catalogued at last.

"The others speak again and again of my foresight during those early months in taking care of the books. We have many fine books—what people call solid reading—and a really extraordinary collection of dictionaries. You see, many scholars travel in the Orient, and they feel they must get up on all kinds of things. I suggested to-day that we draw up a constitution for Angel Island. For, by the end of twenty years, there will be a third generation growing up here. And then, the population will increase amazingly. Besides, it offers many subjects for discussion in our evenings at the Clubhouse. . . ."

Holding the tired-out little Junior in her lap, Chiquita rocked and fanned herself and napped.

"OH DON'T bore me with any talk about the new Camp," Clara was saying to Pete. "I'm not an atom interested in it."

"But you're going to live there some time," Pete remonstrated, wrinkling in perplexity his fiery, freckled face.

"Yes, but I don't feel as if I were. It's all so far away. And I never see it. If I had anything to say about it, I might feel differently. But I haven't. So please don't inflict it on me."

"But it's the inspiration of building it for you women," Pete said gravely, "that makes us men work like slaves. We're only doing it for your sake. It is the expression of our love and admiration for you."

"Oh, slush!" exclaimed Clara flippantly, borrowing from Honey's vocabulary. "You're building it to please yourself. Besides, I don't want to be an inspiration for anything."

"All right, then," Pete said in an aggrieved tone. "But you are an inspiration, just the same. It is the chief vocation of women."

He moved over to the desk and took up a bunch of papers there.

"Oh, are you going to write again this evening?" Clara asked in a burst of despair.

"Yes." Pete hesitated. "I thought I'd work for an hour or two and then I'd go out."

Clara groaned. "If you leave me another minute of this day, I shall go mad. I've had nothing but housework all the morning and then a little talk with the girls, late this afternoon. I want something different now."

"Well, let me read the third act to you," Pete offered.

"No, I don't feel like being read to. I want some excitement."

Pete sighed, and put his manuscript down.

"All right. Let's go in swimming. But I'll have to leave you after an hour."

"Are you going to see Peachy?" Clara demanded shrilly.

"No." Pete's tone was stern. "I'm going to the Clubhouse."

* * *

"How has everything gone to-day, Billy?" Julia asked, as they sat looking out to sea.

"Rather well," Billy answered. "We were all in a working mood and all in good spirits. We've done more to-day than we've done in any three days before. At noon, while we were eating our lunch, I showed them your plans."

"You didn't say—"

"I didn't peep. I promised, you know. I let them assume that they were mine. They went wild over them, threw all kinds of fits. You see, Pete has a really fine artistic sense that's going to waste in all these

minor problems of construction and drainage. I flatter myself that I, too, have some taste. Addington and Honey are both good workmen—that is, they work steadily under instruction. Merrill's only an inspired plumber, of course. Pete and I have been feeling for a long time that we wanted to do something more creative, more esthetic. This is just the thing we needed. I'm glad you thought it out; for I was beginning to grow stale. I sometimes wonder what will happen when the New Camp is entirely built and there's nothing else to do."

Billy's voice had, in spite of his temperamental optimism, a dull note of unpleasant anticipation.

"There'll be plenty to do after that." Julia smiled reassuringly. "I'm working on a plan to lay out the entire island. That will take years and years and years. Even then you'll need help."

"That, my beloved," Billy said, "until the children grow up, is just what we can't get—help."

Julia was silent.

"Julia," he went on, after an interval, in which neither spoke, "won't you marry me? I'm lonely."

The poignant look—it was almost excruciating now—came into Julia's eyes.

"Not now, Billy," she answered.

"And yet you say you love me!"

The sadness went. Julia's face became limpid as water, bright as light, warm as flame. "I love you," she said. "I love you! I love you!" She went on reiterating these three words. And with every iteration, the thrill in her voice seemed to deepen. "And, Billy—"

"Yes."

"I'm not quite sure when—but I know I'm going to marry you some time."

"I'll wait, then," Billy promised. "As long as I know you love me, I can wait until—the imagination of man has not conceived the limit yet."

* * *

"Well, how have you been to-day?" Ralph asked. But before Peachy could speak, he answered himself in a falsetto voice that parodied her round, clear accents, "I want to fly! I want to fly! I want to fly!" His tone was not ill-tempered, however; and his look was humorously affectionate, as one who has asked the same question many times and received the same answer.

"I do want to fly, Ralph," Peachy said listlessly. "Won't you let me? Oh, please let my wings grow again?"

Ralph shook his head inflexibly. "Couldn't do it, my dear. It's not womanly. The air is no place for a woman. The earth is her home."

"That's not argument," Peachy asserted haughtily. "That's statement. Not that I want to argue the question. My argument is unanswerable. Why did we have wings, if not to fly? But I don't want to quarrel—" Her voice sank to pleading. "I'd always be here when you came back. You'd never see me flying. It would not prevent me from doing my duty as your wife or as Angela's mother. In fact, I could do it better because it would make me so happy and well. After a while, I could take Angela with me. Oh, that would be rapture!" Peachy's eyes gleamed.

Ralph shook his head. "Couldn't think of it, my dear. The clouds are no place for my wife. Besides, I doubt if your wings would ever grow after the clipping to which we've submitted them. Now, put something on, and I'll carry you down on the beach."

"Tell me about the New Camp, and what you did today!" Peachy asked, after an interval in which she visibly struggled for control.

"Oh, Lord, ask anything but that," Addington exclaimed with a sudden gust of his old irritability. "I work hard enough all day. When I get home, I want to talk about something else. It rests me not to think of it."

"But, Ralph," Peachy entreated, "I could help you. I know I could. I have so many ideas about things. You know Pete says I'm a real artist. It would interest me so much if you would only talk over the building plans with me."

"I don't know that I am particularly interested in Pete's opinion of your abilities," Addington rejoined coldly. "My dear little girl," he went on, palpably striving for patience and gentleness, "there's nothing you could do to help me. Women are too impractical. This is a man's work, besides. By the way, after we've had our little outing, I'll leave you with Lulu. Honey and Pete and I are going to meet at the Clubhouse to work over some plans."

"All right," Peachy said. She added, "I guess I won't go out, after all. I feel tired. I think I'll lie down for a while."

"Anything I can do for you, dear?" Addington asked tenderly as he left.

"Nothing, thank you." Peachy's voice was stony. Then suddenly she pulled herself upright on the couch. "Oh—Ralph—one minute. I want to talk to you about Angela. Her wings are growing so fast."

CHAPTER VII

DOWN TO EARTH

"WHERE'S Peachy?" Julia asked casually the next afternoon.

"I've been wondering where she was, too," Lulu answered. "I think she must have slept late this morning. I haven't seen her all day."

"Is Angela with the children now?" Julia went on.

"I suppose so," Lulu replied. She lifted herself from the couch. Shading her hands, she studied the group at the water's edge. Honey-Boy and Peterkin were digging wells in the sand. Junior making futile imitative movements, followed close at their heels. Near the group of women, Honey-Bunch crept across the mat of pine-needles, chasing an elusive sunbeam. "No, she's not there."

"Now that I think of it, Angela didn't come to play with Peterkin this morning," said Clara. "Generally she comes flying over just after breakfast."

"You don't suppose Peachy's ill," asked Chiquita, "or Angela."

"Oh, no!" Lulu answered. "Ralph would have told one of us."

"Here she comes up the trail now," Chiquita exclaimed. "Angela's with her."

"Yes—but what's the matter?" Lulu cried. "She's all bent over and she's staggering."

"She's crying," said Clara, after a long, intent look.

"Yes," said Lulu. "She's crying hard. And look at Angela—the darling! She's trying to comfort her."

Peachy was coming slowly toward them; slowly because, although both hands were on the rail, she staggered and stumbled. At intervals, she dropped and crawled on hands and knees. At intervals, convulsions of sobbing shook her, but it was voiceless sobbing. And those silent cataclysms, taken with her blind groping progress, had a sinister quality. Lulu and Julia tottered to meet her. "What is it, oh, what is it, Peachy?" they cried.

Peachy did not reply immediately. She fought to control herself. "Go down to the beach, baby," she said firmly to Angela. "Stay there until mother calls you. Fly away!"

The little girl fluttered irresolutely. "Fly away, dear!" Peachy repeated. Angela mounted a breeze and made off, whirling, circling, dipping, and soaring, in the direction of the water. Once or twice, she paused, dropped and, bounding from earth to air, turned her frightened eyes back to her mother's face. But each time, Peachy waved her on. Angela joined Honey-Boy and Peterkin. For a moment she poised in the air; then she sank and began languidly to dig in the sand.

"I couldn't let her hear it," Peachy said. "It's about her. "Ralph—" She lost control of herself for a moment; and now her sobs had voice. "I asked him last night about Angela and her flying. I don't exactly know why I did. It was something you said to me yesterday, Julia, that put it into my head. He said that when she was eighteen, he was going to cut her wings just as he cut mine."

There came clamor from her listeners. "Cut Angela's wings!" "Why?" "What for?"

Peachy shook her head. "I don't know yet why, although he tried all night to make me understand. He said that he was going to cut them for the same reason that he cut mine. He said that it was all right for her to fly now when she was a baby and later when she was a very young girl, that

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it was 'girlish' and 'beautiful' and 'lovely' and 'charming' and 'fascinating' and—and—a lot of things.

"He said that he could not possibly let her fly when she became a woman, that then it would be 'unwomanly' and 'unlovely' and 'uncharming' and 'unfascinating.' He said that even if he were weak enough to allow it, her husband never would. I could not understand his argument. I could *not*. It was as if we were talking two languages. Besides, I could scarcely talk, I cried so. . I've cried for hours and hours and hours."

"Sit down, Peachy," Julia advised gently. "Let us all sit down." The women sank to their couches. But they did not lounge; they continued to sit rigidly upright. "What are you going to do, Peachy?"

"I don't know. But I'll throw myself into the ocean with Angela in my arms before I'll consent to have her wings cut. Why, the things he said. Lulu, he said that Angela might marry Honey-boy, as they were the nearest of age. He said that Honey-Boy would certainly cut her wings, that he, no more than Honey, could endure a wife who flew. He said that all earth-men were like that. Lulu, would you let your child do—do—that to my child?"

Lulu's face had changed—almost horribly. Her eyes glittered between narrowed lids. Her lips had pulled away from each other, baring her teeth. "You tell Ralph he's mistaken about my son," she ground out.

"That's what I told him," Peachy went on in a breaking voice. "But he said you wouldn't have anything to do or say about it. He said that Honey-Boy would be trained in these matters by his father, not by his mother. I said that you would fight them both. He asked me what chance you would have against your husband and your son. He—he—he always spoke as if Honey-Boy were more Honey's child than yours, and as though Angela were more his child than mine.

"He said that he had talked this question over with the other men when Angela's wings first began to grow. He said that they made up their minds, then, that her wings must be cut when she grew up. I besought him not to do it—I begged, I entreated, I pleaded. He said that nothing I could say would change him. I said that you would all stand by me in this, and he asked me what we five could do against them. He called us five tottering females. Oh, it grew dreadful. I shrieked at him.

"As he left, he said, 'Remember your first day in the Clubhouse, my dear! That's my answer.'" She turned to Clara. "Clara, if you had a daughter, would you let a son of mine or any of these women clip her wings? Will you suffer Peterkin to clip Angela's wings?"

CLARA'S whole aspect had fired. Flame seemed to burst from her gray-green eyes, sparks to shoot from her tawny head. "I would strike him dead first."

Peachy turned to Chiquita. The color had poured into Chiquita's face until her full brown eyes glared from a purple mask. "You, too, Chiquita. You may bear girl-children. Oh, will you help me?"

"I'll help you," Chiquita said steadily. She added after a pause, "I cannot believe that they'll dare, though."

"Oh, they'll dare anything," Peachy said bitterly. "Earth-men are devils. What shall we do, Julia?" she asked wearily.

Julia had risen. She stood upright. Curiously, she did not totter. And despite her shorn pinions, she seemed more than ever to tower like some Winged Victory of the air. Her face glowed with rage. As on that fateful day at the Clubhouse, it was as though a fire had been built in an alabaster vase. But as they looked at her, a rush of tears wiped the flame from her eyes. She sank back again on the couch. She put her hands over her face and sobbed.

"At last," she said strangely. "At last! At last! At last!"

"What shall we do, Julia?" Peachy asked stonily.

"Rebel!" answered Julia.

"But how?"

"Refuse to let them cut Angela's wings."

"Oh, I would not dare open the subject with Ralph," Peachy said in a terror-stricken voice. "In the mood he's in, he'd cut her wings to-night."

"I don't mean to tell him anything about it," Julia replied. "Rebel in secret. I mean—they overcame us once by strategy. We must beat them now by superior strategy."

"You don't really mean anything secret, do you, Julia?" Lulu remonstrated. "That wouldn't be quite fair, would it?"

And curiously enough, Julia answered in the exact words that Honey had used once. "Anything's fair in love or war—and this is both. We can't be fair. We can't trust them. We trusted them once. Once is enough for me."

"But how, Julia?" Peachy asked. Her

voice had now a note of querulousness in it. "How are we going to rebel?"

Julia started to speak. Then she paused. "There's something I must ask you first. Tell me, all of you, what did you do with your wings when the men cut them off?"

The rage faded out of the four faces. A strange reticence seemed to blot out expression. The reticence changed to reminiscence, to a deep sadness.

Lulu spoke first. "I thought I was going to keep my wings as long as I lived. I always thought of them as something wonderful, left over from a happier time. I put them away, done up in silk. And at first I used to look at them every day. But I was always sad afterward—and—and gradually, I stopped doing it. Honey hates to come home and find me sad. Months went by—I only looked at them occasionally. And after a while, I did not look at them at all.

"Then, one day, after Honey built the fireplace for me, I saw that we needed something—to—to—to sweep the hearth with. I tried all kinds of things, but nothing was right. Then, suddenly, I remembered my wings. It had been two years since I'd looked at them. And after that long time, I found that I didn't care so much. And so—and so—one day I got them out and cut them into little brooms for the hearth. Honey never said anything about it—but I knew he knew. Somehow—" A strange expression came into the face of the unanalytic Lulu. "I always have a feeling that Honey enjoys using my wings about the hearth."

Julia hesitated. "What did you do, Chiquita?"

"Oh, I had all Lulu's feelings at first, of course. But it died as hers did. You see this fan. You have often commented on how well I've kept it all these years—I've mended it from month to month with feathers from my own wings. The color is becoming to me—and Frank likes me to carry a fan. He says that it makes him think of a country called Spain that he always wanted to visit when he was a youth."

"And you, Clara?" Julia asked gently.

"Oh, I went through," Clara replied, "just what Lulu and Chiquita did. Then, one day, I said to myself, 'What's the use of weeping over a dead thing?' I made my wings into wall-decorations. You're right about Honey, Lulu." For a moment there was a shade of conscious coquetry in Clara's voice. "I know that it gives Pete a feeling of satisfaction—I don't exactly know why (unless it's a sense of having conquered)—to see my wings tacked up on his bedroom walls."

Peachy did not wait for Julia to put the question to her. "As soon as I could move, after they freed us from the Clubhouse, I threw mine into the sea. I knew I should go mad if I kept them where I could see them every day. Just to look at them was like a sharp knife going through my heart. One night, while Ralph was asleep, I crawled out of the house on my hands and knees, dragging them after me. I crept down to the beach and threw them into the vater. They did not sink—they floated. I stayed until they drifted out of sight. The moon was up. It shone on them. Oh, the glorious blue of them—and the glitter—the—the—" But Peachy could not go on.

"What did you do with yours, Julia?" Lulu asked at last.

"I kept them until last night," Julia answered. "Among the ship's stuff was a beautiful carved chest. It was packed with linen. Billy said it was some earth-girl's wedding outfit. I took everything out of the chest and put my wings in it. Folded carefully, they just fitted. I used to brood over them every night before I went to bed. Oh, they were wonderful in the dark—as if the chest were full of white fire. Many times I've waked up in the middle of the night and gone to look at them. I don't know why, but I had to do it. After a while, it hurt me so much that I made up my mind to lock the chest forever, for I always wept. I could not help it."

Julia wept now. The tears poured down her cheeks. But she went on.

"After yesterday's talk, I thought this situation over for a long time. Then I went to the chest, took out my wings, brought them downstairs and—and—and—"

"What?" somebody whispered.

"Burned them!" Julia's deep voice swelled on the word "burned" as though she still felt the scorching agony of that moment.

FOR a long moment, nobody spoke.

Julia asked their question for them. "Do you want to know why I did it?" And without waiting, she answered, "Because I wanted to mark in some way the end of my desire to fly. We must stop wanting to fly, we women. We must stop wasting our energy brooding over what's past. We must stop it at once. Not only that but—for Angela's sake and for the sake of all girl-children who will be born on this island—we must learn to walk."

"Learn to walk!" Peachy repeated. "Julia,

have you gone mad? We have always held out against this degradation. We must continue to do so." Again came that proud lift of her shoulders, the vibrant stir of wings-stumps. "That would lower us to a level with men."

"But are we lowering ourselves?" Julia asked. "Are they really on a lower level? Isn't the earth as good as the air?"

"It's better, Julia," Lulu said unexpectedly. "The earth's a fine place. It's warm and homelike. Things grow there. There's nothing in the air."

"There are the stars," murmured Peachy.

"Yes," said Julia with a soft tenderness, "but we never reached them."

"The air-life may not have been better or finer," Peachy continued, "but, somehow, it seemed clearer and purer. The earth's such a cluttered place. It's so full of *things*. You can hardly see it for the stuff that's on it. From above it seems beautiful, but near—"

"Yet, it is on the earth that we must live—and that Angela must live," Julia interpolated gently.

"But what is the use of our learning to walk?" Peachy demanded.

"Teach Angela how to walk and all the other girl-children that are coming to us."

"But I am afraid," Peachy said anxiously, "that if Angela learned to walk, she would forget how to fly."

"On the contrary," Julia declared, "she would fly better for knowing how to walk, and walk better for knowing how to fly."

"I don't see it," interposed Clara emphatically. "I don't see what we get out of walking or what Angela will get out of it. Suppose we learned to walk? The men would stop helping us along. We'd lose the appeal of helplessness."

"But what is there about what you call 'the appeal of helplessness' that makes it worth keeping?" Julia asked, smiling affectionately into Clara's eyes. "Why shouldn't we lose it?"

"Why, because," Clara exclaimed indignantly, "because—because—why, because," she ended lamely. Then with one of her unexpected bursts of mental candor, "I'm sure I don't know why," she admitted, "except that we have always appealed to them for that reason. Then again," she took up her argument from another angle, "if we learn to walk, they won't wait on us any more. They may even stop giving us things. As it is now, they're really very generous to us."

The others smiled with varying degrees of furtiveness. Pete, as they all knew, could always placate an incensed Clara by offering her some loot of the homeward way: a bunch of flowers, a handful of nuts, beautifully colored pebbles, shells with the iridescence still wet on them. She soon tired of these toys, but she liked the excitement of the surprise.

"Generous to us!" Chiquita burst out—and this was as unexpected as Lulu's face-about. "Well, when you come to that, they're never generous to us. They make us pay for all they give us. They seem generous—but they aren't really—any more than we are."

"They are far from generous," said Peachy. "They are ungenerous. They're tyrants. They're despots. See how they took advantage of our innocence and ignorance of earth-conditions."

"I protest." A note that they had never heard from Julia made steel of the thrilling melody of her voice. "You must know that is not true!" she said in an accusing voice. "Be fair to them! Tell the truth to yourselves! If they took advantage of our innocence and ignorance, it was we who tempted them to it in the first place. As for our innocence and ignorance—you speak as if they were beautiful or desirable. We were innocent and ignorant of earth-conditions because we were too proud to learn about them, because we always assumed that we lowered ourselves by knowing anything about them. Our mistake was that we learned to fly before we learned to walk."

"But, Julia, what are we going to do about Angela?" Peachy asked impatiently.

"I'm coming to that presently," Julia answered. "But before—I want to ask you a question. Do you remember the big cave in the northern reef—the one we used to hide in?"

"Oh, I remember," Lulu said, "perfectly."

"Did you ever tell Honey about it?" Julia turned to her directly.

"No. Why, we promised never to tell, didn't we? In case we ever needed a place of refuge—"

"HAVE any of you ever told about it?" Julia turned to the others. "Think carefully! This is important."

"I never have told," Peachy said wearily.

"Have you, Chiquita?" Julia interrupted with a strange insistence.

"I have never thought of it from that day to this," Chiquita answered.

"Nor I," replied Clara. "I'm not sure that I could go to it now. Could you, Julia?"

"Oh, yes," Julia answered eagerly, "I've—" She stopped abruptly. "But now I want to talk to you, and I want you to listen carefully. I am going to tell you why I think we should learn to walk. It is, in brief, for Angela's sake and for the sake of every girl-child that is born on this island. For a long time, you will think that I am talking about other things. But you must be patient. I have seen this situation coming ever since Angela's wings began to grow. I could not hurry it—but I knew it must come. Many nights I have lain awake, planning what I should say to you when the time came. The time has come—and I am going to say it. It is a long, long speech that I shall deliver; and I am going to speak very plainly. But you must not get angry—for you know how much I love you and how much I love your children.

"I'm going back to our young girlhood, to the time when our people were debating the Great Flight. We thought that we were different from them all, we five, that we were more original and able and courageous.

"And we *were* different. For when our people decided to go south to the Snowlands, the courage of rebellion grew in us and we deserted in the night. Do you remember the wonderful sense of freedom that came to us, and how the further north we flew, the stronger it became? When we found these islands, it seemed to us that they must have been created especially for us. Here, we said, we would live always, free from earth-ties—five incorruptible air-women.

"Then the men came. I won't go into all that. We've gone over it hundreds and hundreds of times, just as we did this afternoon, playing the most pathetic game we know—the do-you-remember game. But after they came, we found that we were not free from earth-ties. For the Great Doom overtook us and we fell in love. Then came the capture. And we lost our wings."

She paused a moment.

"Do you remember that awful day at the Clubhouse, how Chiquita comforted us? I—I failed you then; I fainted; I felt myself to blame for your betrayal. But Chiquita kept saying, 'Don't be afraid. They won't hurt us. We are precious to them. They would rather die than lose us. They need us more than we need them. They are bound to us by a chain that they cannot break.' And for a long time that seemed true. What we had to learn was that we needed them just as much as they needed us, that we were bound to them by a chain that *we* could not break.

"I often think"—Julia's voice had become dreamy—"now when it is so different, of those first few months after the capture. How kind they were to us, how gentle, how considerate, how delicate, how chivalrous! Do you remember that they treated us as if we were children, how, for a long time, they pretended to believe in fairies? Do you remember the long fairy-hunts in the moonlit jungle, the long mermaid hunts in the moonlit ocean? Do you remember the fairy-tales by the fire? It seemed to me then that life was one long fairy-tale. And how quickly we learned their language! Has it ever occurred to you that no one of them has ever bothered to learn ours—none except Frank, and he only because he was mentally curious? Then came the long wooing. How we argued the marriage question—discussed and debated—each knowing that the Great Doom was on her and could not be gainsaid.

"Then came the betrothal, the marriages, and suddenly all that wonderful starlight and firelight life ended. For a while, the men seemed to drift away from each other. For a while, we—the 'devoted five,' as our people called us—seemed to drift away from each other. It was as though they took back something they had freely given each other to give to us. It was as though we took back something we had freely given each other to give to them.

"Then, just as suddenly, they began to drift away from us and back to each other. Some of the high, worshiping quality in their attitude toward us disappeared. It was as though we had become less beautiful, less interesting, less desirable—as if possession had killed some precious, perishable quality.

"What that quality is I do not know. We are not dumb like stones or plants, we women. We are not dull like birds or beasts. We do not fade in a day like flowers. We do not stop like music. We do not go out like light. What it was that went, or when or how, I do not know. But it was something that thrilled and enchanted them. It went—and it went forever.

"It was as though we were toys—new toys—with a secret spring. And if one found and pressed that spring, something unexpected and something unbelievably wonderful would happen. They hunted for

that spring untiringly—hunted—and hunted—and hunted. At last they found it. And after they found it, we no longer interested them. The mystery and fascination had gone. After all, a toy is only a toy.

"Then came our great trouble—that terrible time of the illicit hunting. Every man of them making love to some one of you. Every woman of you making love to some one of them. That was a year of despair for me. I could see no way out. It seemed to me that you were all drifting to destruction and that I could not stay you. And then I began to realize that the root of evil was only one thing—idleness. Idle men! Idle women! And as I wondered what we should do next, Nature took the matter in her hands. She gave all you women work to do."

Julia paused. Her still gray eyes fixed on faraway things.

"Honey-Boy was born, then Peterkin, then Angela, then Honey-Bunch. And suddenly everything was right again. But, somehow, the men seemed soon to exhaust the mystery and fascination of fatherhood just as they had exhausted the mystery and fascination of husbandhood. They became restless and irritable. It seemed to me that another danger beset us—vague, monstrous, looming—but I did not know what. You see, they have the souls of discoverers and explorers and conquerors, these earth-men. They are creators. Their souls are filled with an eternal unrest. Always they must attempt one thing more; ever they seek something beyond.

"They would stop the sun and the moon in their courses; they would harness the hurricane; they would chain the everlasting stars. Sea, earth, sky are but their playgrounds; past, present, future their servants; they lust to conquer the unexplored areas of space and time. It came to me that what they needed was work of another kind.

"One night, when I was lying awake thinking it over, the idea of the New Camp burst on my mind. Do you remember how delighted they were when I suggested it to them, how delighted you were, how gay and jubilant we all were, how, for days and days, we talked of nothing else? And we were as happy over the idea as they. For a long time, we thought that we were going to help.

"WE THOUGHT that we were going with them every day, not to work but to sit in the nearby shade, to encourage them with our praise and appreciation. And we did go for a month. But they had to carry us all the way—or nearly carry us. Think of that—supporting a full-grown woman all that weary road. I saw the feeling begin to grow in them that we were burdens. I watched it develop. Understand me, a beautiful burden, a beloved burden, but still a burden, a burden that it would be good to slip off the back for the hours of the working day.

"I could not blame them. For we were burdens. Then, under one pretext or another, they began to suggest to us not to go daily to the New Camp with them. The sun was too hot; we might fall; insects would sting us; the sudden showers were too violent. Finally, that if we did not watch the New Camp grow, it would be a glorius surprise to us when it was finished.

"At first, you were all touched and delighted with their gallantry—but I—I knew what it meant.

"I tried to stem the torrent of their strange absorption, but I could not. It grew and grew. And now you see what has happened. It has been months since one of us has been to the New Camp and all of you, except Peachy and myself, have entirely lost interest in it. It is not surprising. It is natural. I, too, would lose interest if I did not force myself to talk with Billy about it every night of my life.

"Lulu said yesterday that it seemed strange to her that, after working together all day, they should want to get together in the Clubhouse at night. For a long time that seemed strange to me—until I discovered that there is a chain binding them to each other even as there is a chain binding them to us. And the Bond of Work is stronger than the Bond of Love because Work is a living, a growing thing.

"In the meantime, we have our work too—the five children. But it is a little constructive work—not a great one. For in this beautiful, safe island, there is not much that we can do besides feed them. And so, here we sit day after day, five women who could once fly, big, strong, full-bodied, teeming with various efficiencies and abilities—wasted. If we had kept our wings, we could have been of incalculable assistance to them. Or if we could walk—

"But I won't go further into *our* situation. I want to consider Angela's.

"You are wondering what all this has to do with the matter of Angela's flying. And now I am going to tell you. Don't you see if they wait until she is a woman

before they cut her wings, she will be in the same case that we are in, unable either to fly or to walk. Rather would I myself cut her wings to-night and force her to walk. But on the other hand, should she grow to womanhood with wings, she would be no true mate to a wingless man unless she could also walk.

"No, we must see to it that she both flies and walks. In that case, she will be a perfect mate to the wingless man. Her strength will not be as great as his—but her facility will be greater. She will walk well enough to keep by his side; and her flying will supplement his powers.

"And then—oh, don't you see it—don't you see why we must fight—fight—fight—fight for Angela? Don't you see why her wings are a sacred trust with us? Sometime, there will be born here— Clara," she turned her look on Clara's excited face, "it may be the baby that's coming to you in the spring—sometime there will be born here a boy with wings. Then more and more often they will come until there are as many winged men as winged women. What will become of our girl-children then if their mates fly as well as walk away from them? There is only one way out. And there is only one duty before us—to learn to walk that we may teach our daughters to walk—to preserve our daughters' wings that they may teach their sons to fly."

"But, Julia," Peachy exclaimed, after an instant of dead silence. There was a stir of wonder, flute-like in her voice, a ripple of wonder, flame-like on her face. "Our feet are too fine, too soft. Ralph says that mine are only toy feet, that no creature could really get along on them."

She kicked the loose sandals off. Tiny, slim, delicately chiseled, her feet were of a china whiteness, except where, at the tips, the toes showed a rose-flush or where, over the instep, the veins meandered in a blue network.

"Of course Peachy's feet are smaller than mine," Lulu said wistfully. "But even my workaday little pads wouldn't carry me many steps." From under her skirts appeared a pair of capable-looking, brown feet, square, broad but little and satin-smooth.

"Mine are quite useless," Chiquita sighed. "Oh, why did I let myself grow so big?" There was a note of despair in her velvet voice. "It's almost as if there were no muscles in them." She pulled aside her scarlet draperies. In spite of her increasing size, her dusky feet had kept their aristocratic Andalusian lines.

"And I've always done just the things that would make it impossible for me to walk," said Clara in a discouraged tone. "I've always taken as much care of my feet as my hands—they're like glass." This was true. In the pale-gold of her skin, the pink nails glittered brilliantly.

"And think of your own feet, Julia," Lulu exclaimed. "They're like alabaster. Pete says that from the artist's point of view, they're absolutely perfect. You don't imagine for an instant that you could take a step on them, unsupported?"

"No?" said Julia. "No?" With a swift leap of her body, she stood on the feet in question. And as the others stared, stupefied, she walked with the splendid, swinging gait of an Amazon once, twice, thrice around the Playground.

* * *

"Come, Angela!" Peachy called. "Come, baby!"

Angela started to spread her pinions. "Don't fly, baby," Peachy called. "Walk!"

Obediently, Angela dropped her wings, sank. Her feet, shell-like, pinky-soft, padded the ground. She tried to balance, but she swayed and fell.

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"No matter, darling!" Peachy called cheerily. "Try again!"

Angela heroically pulled herself up. She made a few uncertain steps, but she stumbled with every move.

Honey-Boy and Peterkin came running up to her side; Junior, grinning happily, waddled behind a long way in the rear. "Angela's trying to walk!" the boys cried. "Angela's trying to walk!" They capered with amusement. "Oh, isn't she funny? Look at the girl trying to walk!"

The tears spurted from Angela's eyes. Her lips quivered. Her wings shot up straight.

"Don't mind what the boys say, Angela!" Peachy called. "Put your wings down! Keep right on walking!"

Again Angela's pinions dropped. Again she took a few steps. This time she fell to her knees. But she pulled herself up, sped onward, fell again, and again. She had reached the stones that bounded the sand. When she arose this last time, her foot was bleeding.

"Keep on walking, baby!" Peachy commanded inflexibly. But there was a rain of tears on her cheek.

Angela staggered forward a rod or two; and now both feet left a trail of blood. Then suddenly again she struggled for balance, fell headlong.

"Keep on walking, mother's heart's treasure," Peachy commanded. She dropped to her knees and held out her arms; her face worked uncontrollably.

Angela pulled herself up with a determined settling of her little rose-petal mouth. Swaying, stumbling, staggering, she ran on in one final spurt until she collapsed in her mother's arms.

CHAPTER VIII

FOR A BETTER WORLD

"AND as soon as we finish the New Camp," Honey said eagerly, "we must make another on the rocks at the north. That will be our summer place."

"And as soon as we've finished that, let's build a house-boat for the lake," Billy suggested.

"Then let's put up some hunting-boxes at the south," Ralph took it up.

"There's a good year's work on the New Camp," Frank reminded them.

"But after the New Camp and the hunting-boxes and the house-boat—what?" Ralph asked a little drearily.

"Plenty to do," Billy promised cheerily. "I've been working on a plan to lay out the entire island in camps and parks. Pete, I want to bring them over to you some night."

"Come to-night," Pete said eagerly.

"Why not bring them to the Clubhouse?" Honey asked. "I'd like to see them, too. While I'm working with my hands on one job, I like to be working with my head on the next."

"Sure," agreed Ralph; "I'm for that. I'll join you to-night. Can you come, Frank?"

"I had meant to write to-night," Frank said. "But of course I can put that off."

"Has it ever occurred to you fellows," Billy asked, "that just as soon as the boys are big enough for us to leave the women in their care, we can build a boat and visit the other four islands?"

"Gee!" Honey said. "Now you're shouting. I never thought of that. Lord, how I would like to get away from this place for a while! Being shut in in any way always gets on my nerves."

Ralph drew a long breath. "I never thought of it," he admitted. "But it gives me a new lease of life."

"I shall feel like Columbus," Pete acknowledged, "and then some. Why it's like visiting the moon—or Mars. And God knows we'll need another island or two in our business—provided we stay here for two or three generations more. We'll be a densely populated world-center before we know it."

"I was thinking," Billy suddenly relapsed to the previous subject. "How about the women to-night? They always hate to have us leave them when we've been away all day—and we've been here two days, remember."

"Oh, that's all right," Honey answered. "I'm sure Lulu'll be all right. There's been the greatest change in her in the last few months."

"Peachy won't mind," said Ralph. "She told me the other night to go to the Clubhouse as often as I wanted and stay as late."

"Clara says practically the same." Pete wrinkled his forehead in perplexity. "It took my breath away. How do you account for it?"

"Oh, that's all right," Honey answered, stopping to dash the sweat from his forehead. "I should say it was just a matter of their getting over their foolishness. I suppose all young married women have it—that instinct to monopolize their husbands. And when you think it over, we

do sort of give them the impression while we're talking to them that they are the whole cheese.

"But that isn't all. They've come to their senses on some other matters. I think, for instance, they're beginning to get our point of view on this flying proposition. Lulu hasn't hinted that she'd like to fly for three months. She's never been so contented since we captured them. To do her justice, though, she always saw, when I pointed it out to her, that flying was foolish, besides being dangerous."

"Well," Ralph said, "what between holding them down from the clouds and keeping them away from the New Camp, managing them has been some job. But I guess you're right, Honey. I think they're reconciled now to their lot. If I do say it as shouldn't, Peachy seems like a regular woman nowadays. She's braced up in fine style in the last two months. Her color is much better; her spirits are high. When I get home at night, she doesn't want to go out at all. If I say that I'm going to the Clubhouse, she never raises a yip. In fact, she seems too tired to care. She's always ready now to turn in when I do. For months and months, you know, she sat up reading until all hours of the night and morning. But now she falls asleep like a child."

"Then she's gotten over that insomnia?" Pete asked this casually and he did not look at Ralph.

"Entirely," Ralph replied briefly, and in his turn he did not look at Pete. "She's a perfectly healthy woman now. She gets her three squares every day and her twelve hours every night—regular. I never saw such an improvement in a woman."

"Well, when it comes to sleeping," Pete said, "I don't believe she's got anything on Clara. I often find her dead to the world when I get home at night. I jolly her about that—for she has always thought going to bed early indicated lack of temperament. And as for teasing to be allowed to fly, or to be taken out swimming, or to call on any of you, or to let her tag me here—why, that's all stopped short. She keeps dozing off all the evening. Sometimes in the midst of a sentence, she'll begin to nod. Never saw her looking so well, though."

"Chiquita, on the contrary, isn't sleeping as much as she did," Frank said. "She's more active, though—physically, I mean. She's rejoicing at present over the fact that she's lost twenty-five pounds in the last three months. She said last night that she hadn't been so slim since she was a girl."

"Twenty-five pounds!" exclaimed Honey. "That's a good deal to lose. How the hell—how do you explain it!"

"Increased household activity," Frank replied vaguely. "And then mentally, I think she's more vigorous. She's been reading a great deal by herself. Formerly I found that reading annoyed her—even when I read aloud, explaining carefully as I went along."

"I haven't noticed an increased activity on Julia's part," Billy said thoughtfully. "But she's always been extraordinarily active, considering everything. The way she gets about is marvelous. But of course she's planned the placing of her furniture with that in view. She's as quick as a cat. I have noticed, however, that she seems much happier. They certainly are a changed lot of women."

"The twelve o'clock whistle has just blown," Honey announced. "Let's eat."

The five men dropped their tools. They gathered their lunches together and fell to a voracious feeding. At last, pipes appeared. They stretched themselves to the smoker's ease. For a while, the silence was unbroken. Then, here and there, somebody dropped an irrelevant remark. Nobody answered it.

THEY lay in one corner of the big space which had been cleared from the jungle chaos. On one side rippled the blue lake curving into many tiny bays and inlets and padded with great green oases of matted lily-leaves. On the other side rose the highest hill on the island. The cleared land stretched to the very summit of this hill. Over it lay another chaos, the chaos of confusion; half-completed buildings of log and stone, rectangles and squares of dug-up land where buildings would some day stand, half-finished roadways, ditches of muddy water, hills of round beach-stones, piles of logs, some stripped of the bark, others still trailing a green huddle of leaf and branch, tools everywhere.

The jungle rolled like a tidal wave to the very boundary; in places its green spume had fallen over the border. As the men smoked, their eyes went back to the New Camp again and again. It was obvious that constantly they made mental measurements, that ever in their mind's eye they saw the completed thing.

"Well," said Ralph, reverting without warning to the subject under discussion. His manner tacitly assumed that the

others had also been considering it mentally. "I confess I don't understand women really. I've always thought that I did. But I see now that I never have."

Addington's rare outbursts of frankness in regard to the other sex were the more startling because they contrasted so sharply with his normal attitude of lordly understanding and contempt.

"I've been a good manager and I'm not saying that I haven't had my successes with them. But as I look back upon them now, I realize I followed my intuitions, not my reason. I've done what I've done without knowing why. I have to feel my way still. I can't account for the change that's come over them. For four years now they've been at us to let their wings grow again. And for four years we've been saying *no* in every possible tone of voice and with every possible inflection. I've had no idea that Peachy would ever get over it. My God, you fellows have no idea what I've been through with her in regard to this question of flying. Why, one night three months ago, she had an awful attack of hysteria because I told her I'd have to cut Angela's wings as soon as she was grown-up."

"Well, what did she expect?" Honey asked.

"That I'd let her keep them—that I'd let her fly the way Peachy did! Or—what do you suppose she suggested?—that I cut them off now."

"Well, what was her idea in that?" Billy's tone was the acme of perplexity.

"That as long as I wouldn't let her keep them after she had attained her growth, she might as well not have them at all."

Billy laughed. "That's a woman's reasoning all right, all right. Why, it would destroy half Angela's charm, in my eyes. That little fluttering flight of hers, half on the ground, half in the air, is so lovely, so engaging, so endearing— But of course letting her fly high would be—"

"Absurd," Ralph interrupted.

"Dangerous," Honey interpolated.

"Unwomanly," Pete added.

"Immodest," Billy concluded.

"Well, thank God it's all over," Ralph went on. "But, as I say, I give up guessing what's changed her, unless it's the principle that constant dropping wears away the stone. Oscar Wilde had the answer. They're sphinxes without secrets. They do anything that occurs to them and for no particular reason. I get along with them only by laying down the law and holding them to it. And I reckon they've got that idea firmly fixed in their minds now—that they're to stay where we put them."

Honey wriggled as if in discomfort. "Seems to me, Ralph, you take a pretty cold-blooded view of the situation. I guess I don't go very far with you. Not that I pretend to understand women. I don't. My system with them is to give them anything they ask, within reason, of course, to keep them busy and happy, buy them presents, soft-soap them, jolly them. I suppose that, personally, I wouldn't have minded their flying a little every afternoon, as long as they took the proper care."

"I don't know," Billy burst in hotly, "which of you two makes me the sickest and which is the most insulting in his attitude towards women, you, Ralph, who treat them as if they were household pets, or you, Honey, who treat them as if they were dolls. In my opinion there is only one law to govern a man's relation with a woman—the law of chivalry. To love her, and cherish her, to do all the hard work of the world for her, to stand between her and everything that is unbeautiful and unpleasant, to think for her, to put her on a pedestal and worship her; to my mind that sums up the whole duty of man to woman."

"They're better than goddesses on pedestals," Pete said. "They're creatures neither of flesh nor of marble—they're ideals. They're made of stars, sunlight, moonshine. I believe in treating them like beings of a higher world."

"I disagree with all of you," Frank said ponderously, "I don't believe in treating them as if they were pets or dolls, or goddesses on pedestals or ideals. I believe in treating them like human beings, the other half of the race. I don't see that they are any better or any worse than we—they're about the same. Soon after we captured them, you remember, we entered into an agreement that no one of us would ever let his wife's wings grow without the consent of all the others. One minute after I had given my word, I was sorry for it. But you kept your word to me in the agreement that I forced on you before the capture; and, so, I shall always keep mine to you. But I regret it more and more as time goes on.

"You see I'm so constituted that I can't see anything but abstract justice. And according to abstract justice we have no right to hold these women bound to the earth. If the air is their natural habitat,

it is criminal for us to keep them out of it. They're our equals in every sense—I mean in that they supplement us, as we supplement them. They've got what we haven't got and we've got what they haven't got. They can't walk, but they can fly. We can't fly, but we can walk. It is as though they compelled us, creatures of the earth, to live in the air all the time."

"I NEVER listened to such sophistry in my life," said Ralph in disgust. "You'll be telling us next," he added sarcastically, "that we hadn't any right to capture them."

"We hadn't," Frank replied promptly. "On reflection, I consider that the second greatest crime of my existence. But that's done and can't be wiped out. They own this island just as much as we do. They'd been coming to it for months before we saw it. They ought to have every kind of right and freedom and privilege on it that we have."

"I'd like to hear," Addington said in the high, thin tone of his peevish disgust, "the evidence that justifies you in saying that. What have they ever done on this island to put them on an equality with us? Aren't they our inferiors from every point of view, especially physically?"

"Certainly they are," agreed Honey, not peevishly but as one who endorses, unnecessarily, a self-evident fact. "They've lived here on Angel Island as long as we have. But they haven't made good yet, and we have. Why, just imagine them working on the New Camp—playing tennis, even."

"But we prevented all that," Frank protested. "We cut their wings. Handicapped as they were by their small feet, they could do nothing."

"But," Honey ejaculated, "if they'd been our physical equals, they would never have let us cut their wings."

"But we caught them with a trick," Frank said, "we put them in a position in which they could not use their physical strength."

"Well, if they'd been our mental equals, they'd never let themselves get caught like that."

"There's one thing about them that certainly is to laugh," Honey said after a silence, a glint of amusement in his big eyes, "and that is the care they take of those useless feet of theirs. Lulu's even taking to doing hers up every night in oil or cream."

"Oh, that's different," Ralph said. "Honey's right. That business of taking care of their feet symbolizes the whole sex to me. They do the things they do just because the others do them—like sheep jumping over a wall. Their fad at present is pedicure. Peachy's at it just like the rest of them. Every night when I come home, I find her sitting down with both feet done up in one of those beautiful scarfs she's collected, resting on a cushion. It's rather amusing, though." Ralph struggled to suppress his smile of appreciation.

"Clara's the same." Pete smiled too. "She's cut herself out some high sandals from a pair of my old boots. And she wears them day and night. She says she's been careless lately about getting her feet sunburned. And she's not going to let me see them until they're perfectly white and transparent again. She says that small, beautiful, and useless feet were one of the points of beauty with her people."

"Julia's got the bug, too." Billy's eyes lighted with a gleam of tenderness. "Among the things she found in the trunk was a box of white silk stockings and some mocassins. She's taken to wearing them lately. It always puts a crimp in me to get a glimpse of them—as if she'd suddenly become a normal, civilized woman."

Statement of the ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, as amended by the acts of March 3, 1933, and July 2, 1946, of Famous Fantastic Mysteries, published bi-monthly at Chicago, Illinois, for October 1, 1948. State of New York, county of New York, ss. Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Harold S. Goldsmith, who having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Publisher of Famous Fantastic Mysteries, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the acts of March 3, 1933, and July 2, 1946 (section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations), printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, Harold S. Goldsmith, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.; Editor, Henry Steeger, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.; Managing Editor, none; Business Manager, none. 2. That the owner is: All Fiction Field, Inc., 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.; Popular Publications, Inc., 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.; Henry Steeger, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.; Harold S. Goldsmith, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.; Shirley M. Steeger, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: none. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner, and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest, direct or indirect, in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. Harold S. Goldsmith, Publisher. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 15th day of October, 1948. Eva M. Walker, Notary Public, New York County Clerk's No. 116. Register's No. 363-W-0. (My commission expires March 30, 1950.) [Seal]—Form 3526—Rev. 7-46.

"Now that I think of it," Frank said, "Chiquita asked me for a pair of shoes. She's wearing them all the time now to protect her feet—from the hot sun she says."

"It is the most curious thing," Billy said, "that they have never wanted to walk. Not that I want them to now," he added hastily. "That's their greatest charm in my eyes—their helplessness. It has a curious appeal. But it is singular that they never even tried it, if only out of curiosity."

"They have great contempt for walking," Honey observed. "And it has never occurred to them, apparently, that they could enjoy themselves so much more if they could only get about freely. Not that I want them to—any more than you. That utter helplessness is, as you say, appealing."

"Oh, well," Ralph said contemptuously, "what can you expect of them? I tell you it's lack of gray matter. They don't cerebrate. They don't coordinate. They don't correlate. They have no initiative, no creative faculty, no mental curiosity or reflexes or reactions. They're nothing but an unrelated bunch of instincts, intuitions, and impulses—human nonsense machines! Why, if the positions were reversed and we'd lost our wings, we'd have been trying to walk the first day. We'd have been walking better than they by the end of a month."

"I like it just as it is," Pete said contentedly. "They can't fly and they don't want to walk. We always know where to find them."

"Thank God we don't have to consider that matter," Billy concluded. "Apparently the walking impulse isn't in them. They might some time, by hook or crook, wheedle us into letting them fly a little. But one thing is certain, they'll never take a step on those useless feet."

"Delicate, adorable, useless little feet of theirs," Pete said softly as if he were reciting from an ode.

"There's something moving along the trail, boys," Frank said quietly. "I keep getting glimpses of it through the bushes —white—blue—red and yellow."

The others stopped, petrified. They scowled, bending an intent gaze through the brilliant noon sunshine.

"Sure I get it!" Billy answered in a low tone. "There's something there."

"I don't." Honey shaded his eyes.

"Nor I." Pete squinted.

"Well, I don't see anything," Ralph said impatiently. But providing you fellows aren't nuts, what the devil can it be?"

"It's—" Billy began. Then, "My God!" he ended.

Something white glimmered at the end of the trail. It grew larger, bulked definitely, filled the opening.

"Julia!" Billy gasped.

"And she's—she's—" Honey could not seem to go on.

"Walking," Billy concluded for him.

"And Peachy!" Ralph exclaimed.

"And, why—and—and—" It was Pete who stopped for breath this time.

"And she's walking!" Ralph concluded for himself.

"And Clara!" "And Lulu!" "And Chiquita!" they greeted each one of the women as fast as they appeared. And in between them came again and again their astonished "and walking!"

THE five women were walking, and walking with no appearance of effort, swiftly, lightly, joyously. Julia, at the head, moved with the frank, free, swinging gait of an Amazon. Peachy seemed to flit along the ground; there was in her progress something of the dipping, curving grace of her flight. Clara glided; her effect of motionless movement was almost obsidian. Chiquita kept the slow, languid gait, both swaying and pulsating, of a Spanish woman. Lulu trotted with the brisk, pleasing activity of a Morgan pony.

Their skirts had been shortened; they rippled away from slim ankles. The swathing, wing-like draperies had disappeared; their slit sleeves fluttered away from bare shoulders. The women did not pause. They came on steadily, their eyes fixed on the group of men.

The faces in that group had changed in expression. Ralph's became black and lowering. Honey looked surprised but interested; his color did not vary; Billy turned a deep brick-red. Pete went white. Frank Merrill alone studied the phenomenon with the cool, critical eye of scientific observation.

The women paused at a little distance where the path dipped to coil around a little knoll. They abandoned the path to climb this knoll; they climbed it with surprising ease; they almost flew up the sides. They stood there silently grouped about Julia. For an instant the two parties gazed at each other.

Then, "What does this mean, Peachy?" Ralph asked sternly.

Julia answered for Peachy.

"It means—rebellion," she said. "It means that we have decided among ourselves that we will not permit you to cut Angela's wings. It means that rather than have you do that, we will leave you, taking our children with us. If you will promise us that you will not cut Angela's wings nor the wings of any child born to us, we in our turn will promise to return to our homes and take our lives up with you just where we left off."

A confused murmur arose from the men. Ralph leaped to his feet. He made a movement in the direction of the women, involuntary but violent.

The women shrank closer to Julia. They turned white, but they waited. Julia did not stir.

"Go home, right—" Ralph stopped abruptly and choked something back.

"Go at once!" Billy added sternly.

"I'm ashamed of you, Clara," Pete said.

"Better go back, girls," Honey advised. He tried to make his tone authoritative. But in spite of himself, there lingered a little pleading in it. To make up, he unmasked the full battery of his coaxing smile, his quizzical frown, his snapping dimples. "We can't let Angela fly after she's grown up. It isn't natural. It isn't what a woman should be doing."

Frank said nothing.

Julia looked at them steadily an instant. "Come!" she said briefly to her little band. The women ran down the knoll and disappeared up the trail.

"Well, I'll be damned," Ralph remarked.

"Well, when you come to that, I'll be *damned*," Honey coincided.

"Who was it said that God did not intend them to walk?" Frank asked slyly.

"So that's what all this bandaging of feet meant," Billy went on, ignoring this thrust. "They were learning to walk all the time."

"You're on," Ralph said in a disgusted tone. "Foxy little devils!"

"Gee, it must have hurt!" Honey exclaimed. "They must have been torn to ribbons at first. Some pluck, believe me!"

"I bet you dollars to doughnuts, Julia's at the bottom of it," remarked Pete.

"No question about that," Frank commented. "Julia *thinks*."

"Considerable bean, too," said Honey. "Well, we've got to put a stop to it tonight."

"Sure!" Ralph agreed. "Read the riot act the instant we get home. By the Lord Harry, if it's necessary I'll tie my wife up!"

"I never could do that," said Pete.

"Nor I," said Frank.

"Nor I," said Honey. "But I don't think we'll have to resort to violent measures. We've only got to appeal to their love; I can twist Lulu round my finger that way."

"I guess you're right." Ralph smiled. "That always fetches them."

"I don't anticipate any real trouble from this," Billy went on as though arguing with himself. "We've got to take it at the start, though. We can't have Angela flying after she's grown."

"Sure," said Honey, "it'll blow over in a few days. But now that they can walk, let's offer to teach them how to dance and play tennis and bocci and golf. And I'll tell you what—we'll lay out some gardens for them—make them think they're beautifying the place. We might even teach them how to put up shelves and a few little carpentering tricks like that. That'll hold them for a while.

"Oh, you'll come around to my tactics sooner or later! Pay them compliments! Give them presents! Jolly them along! And say, it will be fun to have some mixed doubles. Gee, though, they'll be something fierce now they've learned how to walk. They'll be here half the time. They'll have so many ideas how the New Camp ought to be built and a woman is such an obstinate cuss. Asking questions and arguing and interfering—they always delay things so. We've got to find out something harmless that'll keep them busy."

"Oh, we never can have them here—never in the world," Ralph agreed. "But we'll fix them to-night. How about it, old top?" he inquired jovially of Frank.

Frank did not answer.

In point of fact they did not "fix" the women that night, owing to the simple reason that they found the camp deserted—not a sign of woman or child in sight or hearing.

"WELL, there's one thing about it," Ralph said on their way back to the New Camp the next morning, "you can always beat any woman's game by just ignoring it. They can stand anything but not being noticed. Now our play is to do nothing and say nothing. They're on this island somewhere. They can't walk off it, and they can't swim off it, and they can't fly off it. They may stay away for a day or more or possibly two. By the end of a week they'll certainly be starved out. And they'll be longing for our society. We want to keep right at work as if nothing had

happened. Let them go and come as they please. But we take no notice—see! We've done that once before and we can do it again. When they come home, they'll be a pretty tired-out, hungry, discouraged gang of girls. I bet we never hear another word out of them on this subject."

The men worked as usual the whole morning; but they talked less. They were visibly preoccupied. At every pause, they glanced furtively up the trail. When noon came, it was evident that they dropped their tools with relief. They sat with their eyes glued to the path.

"Here they come!" Billy exclaimed at last.

The men did not speak; nor until they came to the little knoll that debouched from the trail did the women. Again Julia acted as spokesman. "We have given you a night to think this matter over," she said briefly. "What is your decision? Shall Angela's wings go uncut?"

"No, by God!" burst out Ralph. "No daughter of mine is going to fly. If you—"

But with a silencing gesture, Billy interposed. "Aren't you women happy?" he asked.

"Oh, no," Julia answered. "Of course we're not. I mean we have one kind of happiness—the happiness that comes from being loved and having a home and children. But there is another kind of happiness of which when you cut our wings we were no longer capable—the happiness that comes from a sense of absolute freedom. We can bear that for ourselves, but not for our daughters. Angela and all the girl-children who follow her must have the freedom that we have lost. Will you give it to them?"

"No!" Ralph yelled. And "Go home!" Honey said brutally.

The women turned and went back down the path.

"Betcha we find them at home tonight," Honey said as they started down the trail an hour ahead of time. "Who'll take me. Come!"

No one took him, luckily for Honey. There was no sign of life that night, not the next, nor the next. And in the meantime, the women did not manifest themselves once during the daytime at the New Camp.

"God, we've got to do something about this," Ralph said at the end of five days. "This is getting serious. I want to see Angela. I hadn't any idea I could miss her so much. It seems as if they'd been gone for a month."

AT noon the five women appeared again at the end of the trail.

In contrast to the tired faces and dishevelled figures of the men, they presented an exquisite feminine freshness, hair beautifully coiled, garments spotless and unwrinkled. But although their eyes were like stars and their cheeks like flowers, their faces were serious; a dew, as of tears lately shed, lay over them.

"Shall Angela fly?" Julia asked without parley.

"No!" Addington yelled.

The women turned.

"Wait a moment," Frank called in a sudden tone of authority. "I'm with you women in this. If you'll let me join your forces, I'll fight on your side."

He had half covered the distance between them before Julia stopped him with a "Wait a moment!" as decisive as his own.

"In the first place," she said, "we don't want your help. If we don't get this by our own efforts, we'll never value it. In the second place, we'll never be sure of it. We don't trust you—quite. You tricked us once. That was your fault. If you trick us again, that's our fault. Thank you—but no, Frank."

The women disappeared down the trail.

"Well, can you beat it?" was the only comment for a moment—and that came from Pete. In another instant, they had turned on Merrill, were upbraiding him hotly for what they called his treason.

"You can't bully me," was his unvarying answer. "Remember, any time they call on me, I'll fight for them."

"Well, you can do what you want with your own wife, of course," Ralph said, falling into one of his black rages. "But I'm damned if you'll encourage mine."

"Boys," he added later, after a day of steadily increasing rage, "I'm tired of this funny business. Let's knock off work to-morrow and hunt them. What gets me is their simplicity. They don't seem to have calculated on our superior strength. It won't take us more than a few hours to run them to earth. By God, I wish we had a pair of bloodhounds."

"All right," said Billy. "I'm with you, Ralph. I'm tired of this."

"Let's go to bed early to-night," said Pete, "and start at sunrise."

"Well," said Honey philosophically, "I've hunted deer, bear, panther, buffalo, Rocky Mountain sheep, jaguar, lion, tiger, and rhinoceros—but this is the first time I ever hunted women."

They started at sunrise—all except Frank, who refused to have anything to do with the expedition—and they hunted all day. At sunset they camped where they fell exhausted. They went back to the search the next day and the next and the next and the next.

And nowhere did they find traces of their prey.

"Where are they?" Ralph said again and again in a baffled tone. "They couldn't have flown away, could they?"

And as often as he asked this question, his companions answered it in the varying tones of their fatigue and their despair. "Of course they couldn't—their wings were too short."

"Still," Frank said once. "It's now long past the half-yearly shearing period." He added in another instant, "I don't think, though, that their wings could more than lift them."

"Well, it's evident, wherever they are, they won't budge until we go back to work," Billy said at the end of a week. "This is useless and hopeless."

The next day they returned to the New Camp.

"Here they come," Billy called joyously that noon. "Thank God!" he added under his breath.

Again the five women appeared at the beginning of the trail. Their faces were white now, hollow and lined; but as ever, they bore a look of extraordinary pristineness. And this time they brought the children. Angela lay in her mother's arms like a wilted flower. Her wings sagged forlornly and her feet were bandaged.

Julia advanced a little from her group and dropped a single monosyllable. "Well?" she said in an inflexible, questioning voice.

Nobody answered her. Instead Addington called in a beseeching voice, "Angela! Angela! Come to me! Come to dad, baby!"

ANGELA'S dead little wings suddenly flared with life—they fluttered in a very panic. She stretched out her arms to her father. She turned her limpid gaze in an agony of infantile entreaty up to her mother's face. But Peachy shook her head. The baby flutter died down. Angela closed her eyes, dropped her head on her mother's shoulder; the tears started from under her eyelids.

"Shall Angela fly?" Julia asked. "Remember this is your last chance."

"No," Ralph said. And the word was the growl of a balked beast.

"Then," Julia said sternly, "we shall leave Angel Island forever."

"You will," Ralph sneered. "You will, will you? All right. Let's see you do it!" Suddenly he started swiftly down toward the trail. "Come, boys!" he commanded. Honey followed—and Billy and Pete.

But, suddenly, Julia spoke. She spoke in the loud, clear tones of her flying days and she used the language of her girlhood. It was a word of command. And as it fell from her lips, the five women leaped

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

DIAN OF THE LOST LAND

★ By Edison Marshall ★

A strange, lost people . . . a race that Time forgot . . . a man who dared to seek into the dawn of history to find a love that was stronger than the centuries.

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from the top of the knoll. But they did not fall into the lake. They did not touch its surface. They flew. Flew—and yet it was not flight. It was half-flight. It was scarcely flight at all. Compared with the magnificent, calm, effortless sweep of their girlhood days, it was almost a grotesque performance.

The men stared for an instant, petrified. Then panic broke. "Come back, Lulu!" Honey yelled. "Come back!" "Julia!" Billy called hoarsely, "Julia! Julia! Julia!" He went on calling her name as if his senses had left him. Pete's lips moved. Words came, but no voice; he stood like a statue, whispering. Merrill remained silent; obviously he could not even whisper; his was the silence of paralysis. Addington, on the other hand, was all voice. "Oh, my God!" he cried. "Don't leave me, Peachy! Don't leave me! Peachy! Angela! Peachy! Angela!" His voice ascended on the scale of hysteric entreaty until he screeched. "Don't leave me! Don't leave me!" He fell to his knees and held out his arms; the tears poured down his face.

The women heard, turned, flew back. Holding themselves above the men's heads, they fluttered and floated. Their faces were working and the tears flowed freely, but they kept their eyes steadily fixed on Julia, waiting for command.

Julia was ghastly. "Shall Angela fly?" she asked. And it was as though her voice came from an enormous distance, so thin and expressionless and far-away had it become.

"Anything!" Addington said. "Anything! Oh, my God, don't leave us!"

Julia said something. Again this word was in their own language and again it was a word of command. But emotion had come into her voice—joy; it thrilled through the air like a magic fluid. The women sank slowly to earth. In another instant the two forces were in each other's arms.

"BILLY," Julia said, as hand in hand they struck into one of the paths that led to the jungle, "will you marry me?"

Billy did not answer. He only looked at her.

"When?" he said finally. "Tomorrow?"

"Today," Julia said.

* * *

Sunset on Angel Island.

The Honeymoon House thrilled with excitement. At intervals figures crowded to the narrow door; at intervals faces crowded in the narrow window. Sometimes it was Lulu, swollen and purple and broken with weeping. Sometimes it was Chiquita, pale and blurred and sagging with tears. Often it was Peachy, whose look, white and sodden, steadily searched the distance. Below on the sand, Clara, shriveled, pinched, bent over, her hands writhing in and out of each other's clasp, paced back and forth, her eye moving always on the path. Suddenly she stopped and listened. There came first a faint disturbance of the air, then confusion, then the pounding of feet. Angela, white-faced, frightened, appeared, flying above the trail. "I found him," she called. Behind came Billy, running. He flashed past Clara. "How is she?" he panted.

"Alive," Clara said briefly.

He flew up the steps. Clara followed, Angela dropped to the sand and lay there, her little head in the crook of her elbow, sobbing.

Inside a murmur of relief greeted Billy. "He's come, Julia," Peachy whispered softly.

The women withdrew from the inner room as Billy passed anxiously over the threshold.

Julia lay on the couch, stately and still. One long white hand rested on her breast. The other stretched at her side; its fingers touched a little bundle there. Her wings—the glorious pinions of her girlhood—towered above the pillow, silver-shining, quiescent. Her honey-colored hair piled in a huge crown above her brow. Her eyes were closed. Her face was like marble; but for an occasional faint movement of the hand at her side, she might have been the sculpture on a tomb.

Her lids flickered as Billy approached, opened on eyes as dull as stones. But as they looked up into his, they filled with light.

"My husband—" she said. Her eyes closed.

But presently they opened and with a greater dazzle of light. "Our son—" The hand at her side moved feebly on the little bundle there. That faint movement seemed a great effort. Her eyes closed again.

But for a third time she opened them, and now they shone with their greatest glory. "My husband—our son—has—wings."

And then Julia's eyes closed for the last time.

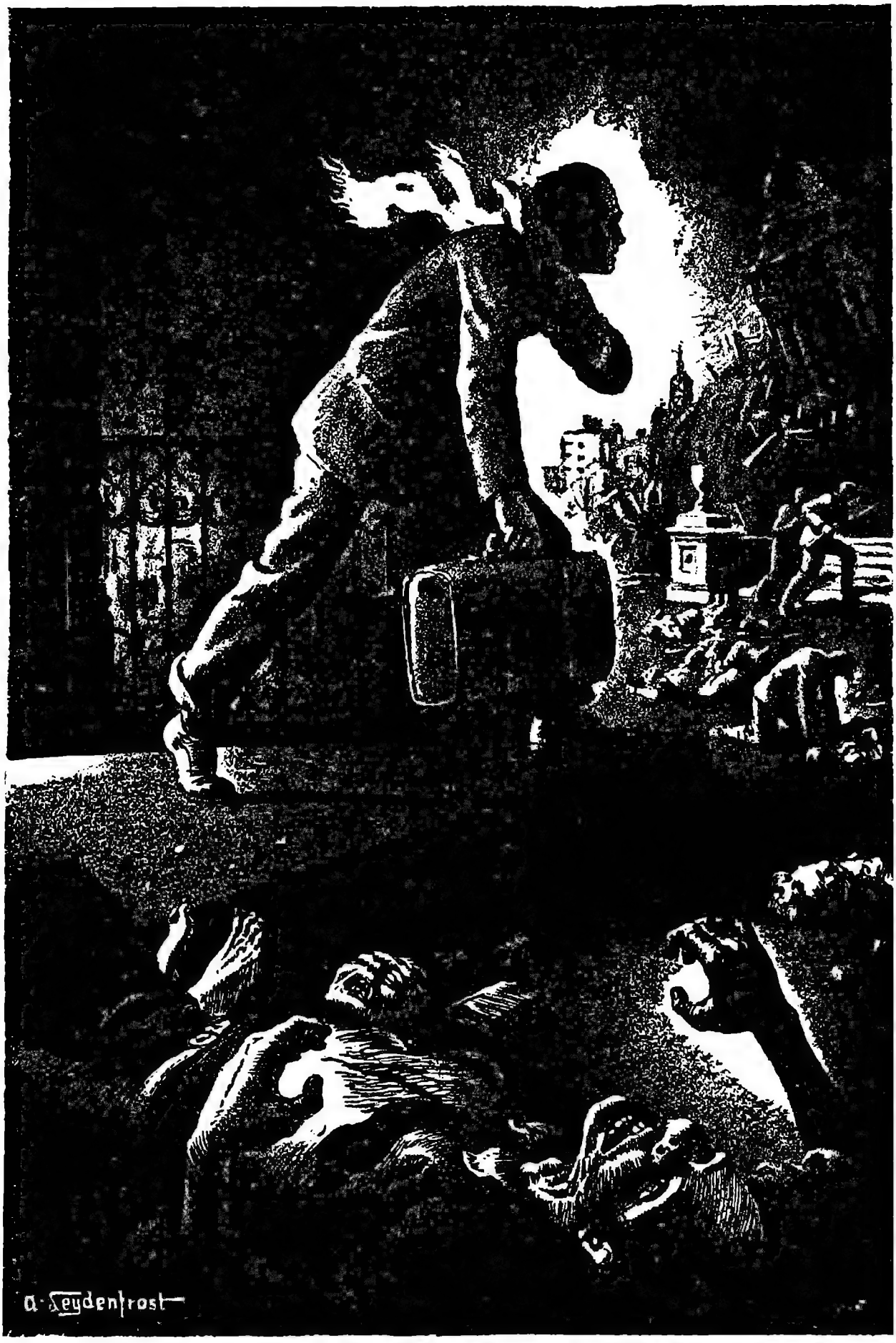
MASTERS of FANTASY

M. P. Shiel—High Priest of Phantasy

"So unusual are all his books that they are sought by collectors of the weird, the fantastic and the strange, with little regard for topic or title," says A. Reynolds Morse, author of the Shielography, of Matthew Phipps Shiel.

Shiel, who died in 1947 at the age of 82, is best known for his novel of cosmic catastrophe to Earth, "The Purple Cloud". Other imagination-stirring titles by this titan of wonder works include "The Weird O' It", "Xelucha", "Dr. Krasinski's Secret", "The Isle of Lies", "The Lord of the Sea" and "The Young Men Are Coming".

Phantasmagorical in a manner thesaurical! This might sum up Shiel, who was an auctorial phenomenon in the field of fantasy. But there are those who feel no pat pharse can sufficiently praise the King of Redonda and the literary legacy that has gained him a niche high among the Immortals.


A. Leydenfrost

"I stumbled upon bodies everywhere . . . even as I looked, men sank down with the death fastened upon them. . . ."

By Jack London

The SCARLET PLAGUE

Across a sick world it had crept, leaving man and his works destroyed. Now, in the twilight of history, only one remembered —a blurred and faded picture of the death of our times. . . .

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CHAPTER I

THE way led along upon what had once been the embankment of a railroad. But no train had run upon it for many years. The forest on either side swelled up the slopes of the embankment and crested across it in a green wave of trees and bushes. The trail was as narrow as a man's body, and was no more than a wild-animal runway. Occasionally, a piece of rusty iron, showing through the forest-

mould, advertised that the rail and the ties still remained. In one place, a ten-inch tree, bursting through at a connection, had lifted the end of a rail clearly into view. The tie had evidently followed the rail, held to it by the spike long enough for its bed to be filled with gravel and rotten leaves, so that now the crumbling, rotten timber thrust itself up at a curious slant. Old as the road was, it was manifest that it had been the mono-rail type.

An old man and a boy travelled along this runway. They moved slowly, for the old man was very old, a touch of palsy made his movements tremulous, and he leaned heavily upon his staff. A rude skull-cap of goat-skin protected his head from the sun. From beneath this fell a scant fringe of stained and dirty-white hair. A visor, ingeniously made from a large leaf, shielded his eyes, and from under this he peered at the way of his feet on the trail.

His beard, which should have been snow-white but which showed the same weather-wear and camp-stain as his hair, fell nearly to his waist in a great tangled mass. About his chest and shoulders hung a single, mangy garment of goat-skin. His arms and legs, withered and skinny, betokened extreme age, as well as did their sunburn and scars and scratches betoken long years of exposure to the elements.

The boy, who led the way, checking the eagerness of his muscles to the slow progress of the elder, likewise wore a single garment—a ragged-edged piece of bear-skin, with a hole in the middle through which he had thrust his head. He could not have been more than twelve years old. Tucked coquettishly over one ear was the freshly severed tail of a pig. In one hand he carried a medium-sized bow and an arrow. On his back was a quiverful of arrows. From a sheath hanging about his neck on a thong, projected the battered handle of a hunting knife.

He was as brown as a berry, and walked softly, with almost a catlike tread. In marked contrast with his sunburned skin were his eyes—blue, deep blue, but keen and sharp as a pair of gimlets. They seemed to bore into all about him in a way that was habitual.

As he went along he smelled things, as well, his distended, quivering nostrils carrying to his brain an endless series of messages from the outside world. Also, his hearing was acute, and had been so trained that it operated automatically. Without conscious effort, he heard all the slight sounds in the apparent quiet—heard, and differentiated, and classified these sounds—whether they were of the wind rustling the leaves, of the humming of bees and gnats, of the distant rumble of the sea that drifted to him only in lulls, or of the gopher, just under his foot, shoving a pouchful of earth into the entrance of his hole.

Suddenly he became alertly tense. Sound, sight, and odor had given him a simultaneous warning. His hand went back to the old man, touching him, and the pair stood still. Ahead, at one side of the top of the embankment, arose a crackling sound, and the boy's gaze was fixed on the tops of the agitated bushes.

Then a large bear, a grizzly, crashed into view, and likewise stopped abruptly, at sight of the humans. He did not like them, and growled querulously. Slowly the boy fitted the arrow to the bow, and slowly he pulled the bowstring taut. But he never removed his eyes from the bear. The old man peered from under his green leaf at the danger, and stood as quietly as the boy.

For a few seconds this mutual scrutinizing went on; then, the bear betraying a growing irritability, the boy, with a movement of his head, indicated that the old man must step aside from the trail and go down the embankment. The boy followed, going backward, still holding the bow taut and ready. They waited till a crashing among the bushes from the opposite side of the embankment told them the bear had gone. The boy grinned as he led back to the trail.

"A big un, Granser," he chuckled.

The old man shook his head.

"They get thicker every day," he complained in a thin, undependable falsetto. "Who'd have thought I'd live to see the time when a man would be afraid of his life on the way to Cliff House? When I was a boy, Edwin, men and women and little babies used to come out here from San Francisco by tens of thousands on a nice day. And there weren't any bears then. No sir. They used to pay money to look at them in cages, they were that rare."

"What is money, Granser?"

Before the old man could answer, the boy recollected and triumphantly shoved his hand into a pouch under his bear-skin and pulled forth a battered and tarnished silver dollar. The old man's eyes glistened, as he held the coin close to them.

"I can't see," he mattered. "You look and see if you can make out the date, Edwin."

The boy laughed.

"You're a great Granser," he cried de-

lightedly, "always making believe them little marks mean something."

THE old man manifested an accustomed chagrin as he brought the coin back again close to his own eyes.

"2012," he shrilled, and then fell to cackling grotesquely. "That was the year Morgan the Fifth was appointed President of the United States by the Board of Magnates. It must have been one of the last coins minted, for the Scarlet Death came in 2013. Lord! Lord!—think of it! Sixty years ago, and I am the only person alive today that lived in those times. Where did you find it, Edwin?"

The boy, who had been regarding him with the tolerant curiousness one accords to the prattlings of the feeble-minded, answered promptly.

"I got it off of Hoo-Hoo. He found it when we was herdin' goats down near San José last spring. Hoo-Hoo said it was *money*. Ain't you hungry, Granser?"

The ancient caught his staff in a tighter grip and urged along the trail, his old eyes shining greedily.

"I hope Hare-Lip's found a crab . . . or two," he mumbled. "They're good eating, crabs, mighty good eating when you've no more teeth and you've got grandsons that love their old grandsire and make a point of catching crabs for him. When I was a boy—"

But Edwin, suddenly stopped by what he saw, was drawing the bow-string on a fitted arrow. He had paused on the brink of a crevasse in the embankment. An ancient culvert had here washed out, and the stream, no longer confined, had cut a passage through the fill.

On the opposite side the end of a rail projected and overhung. It showed rustily through the creeping vines which overran it. Beyond, crouching by a bush, a rabbit looked across at him in trembling hesitancy. Fully fifty feet was the distance, but the arrow flashed true; and the transfixed rabbit, crying out in sudden fright and hurt, struggled painfully into the brush.

The boy himself was a flash of brown skin and flying fur as he bounded down the steep wall of the gap and up the other side. His lean muscles were springs of steel that released into graceful and efficient action. A hundred feet beyond, in a tangle of bushes, he overtook the wounded creature, knocked its head on a convenient tree-trunk, and turned it over to Granser to carry.

"Rabbit is good, very good," the ancient quavered, "but when it comes to a toothsome delicacy I prefer crab. When I was a boy—"

"Why do you say so much that ain't got no sense?" Edwin impatiently interrupted the other's threatened garrulousness.

The boy did not exactly utter these words, but something that remotely resembled them and that was more guttural and explosive and economical of qualifying phrases. His speech showed distant kinship with that of the old man, and the latter's speech was approximately an English that had gone through a bath of corrupt usage.

"What I want to know," Edwin continued, "is why you call crab 'toothsome delicacy.' Crab is crab, ain't it? No one I ever heard calls it such funny things."

The old man sighed but did not answer, and they moved on in silence. The surf grew suddenly louder, as they emerged from the forest upon a stretch of sand dunes bordering the sea. A few goats were browsing among the sandy hillocks, and a skin-clad boy, aided by a wolfish-looking dog that was only faintly reminiscent of a collie, was watching them. Mingled with the roar of the surf was a continuous, deep-throated barking or bellowing, which came from a cluster of jagged rocks a hundred yards out from shore. Here huge sea-lions hauled themselves up to lie in the sun or battle with one another. In the immediate foreground arose the smoke of a fire, tended by a third savage-looking boy. Crouched near him were several wolfish dogs similar to the one that guarded the goats.

The old man accelerated his pace, sniffing eagerly as he neared the fire.

"Mussels!" he muttered ecstatically. "Mussels! And ain't that a crab, Hoo-Hoo? Ain't that a crab? My, my, you boys are good to your old grandsire."

Hoo-Hoo, who was apparently of the same age as Edwin, grinned.

"All you want, Granser. I got four."

The old man's palsied eagerness was pitiful. Sitting down in the sand as quickly as his stiff limbs would let him, he poked a large rock-mussel from out of the coals. The heat had forced its shells apart, and the meat, salmon-colored, was thoroughly cooked. Between thumb and forefinger, in trembling haste, he caught the morsel and carried it to his mouth. But it was too hot, and the next moment was violently ejected. The old man spluttered with the pain, and tears ran out of his eyes and down his cheeks.

The boys were true savages, possessing only the cruel humor of the savage. To them the incident was excruciatingly funny, and they burst into loud laughter. Hoo-Hoo danced up and down, while Edwin rolled gleefully on the ground. The boy with the goats came running to join in the fun.

"Set 'em to cool, Edwin, set 'em to cool," the old man besought, in the midst of his grief, making no attempt to wipe away the tears that still flowed from his eyes. "And cool a crab, Edwin, too. You know your grandsire likes crabs."

FROM the coals arose a great sizzling, which proceeded from the many mussels, bursting open their shells and exuding their moisture. They were large shellfish, running from three to six inches in length. The boys raked them out with sticks and placed them on a large piece of driftwood to cool.

"When I was a boy, we did not laugh at our elders; we respected them."

The boys took no notice, and Granser continued to babble an incoherent flow of complaint and censure. But this time he was more careful, and did not burn his mouth. All began to eat, using nothing but their hands and making loud mouth-noises and lip-smackings. The third boy, who was called Hare-Lip, slyly deposited a pinch of sand on a mussel the ancient was carrying to his mouth; and when the grit of it bit into the old fellow's mucous membrane and gums, the laughter was again uproarious. He was unaware that a joke had been played on him, and spluttered and spat until Edwin, relenting, gave him a gourd of fresh water with which to wash out his mouth.

"Where's them crabs, Hoo-Hoo?" Edwin demanded, "Granser's set upon having a snack."

Again Granser's eyes burned with greediness as a large crab was handed to him. It was a shell with legs and all complete, but the meat had long since departed. With shaky fingers and babblings of anticipation, the old man broke off a leg and found it filled with emptiness.

"The crabs, Hoo-Hoo?" he wailed. "The crabs?"

"I was foolin', Granser. They ain't no crabs. I never found none."

The boys were overwhelmed with delight at sight of the tears of senile disappointment that dribbled down the old man's cheeks. Then unnoticed, Hoo-Hoo replaced the empty shell with a fresh-cooked crab. Already dismembered, from the cracked legs the white meat sent forth a small cloud of savory steam. This attracted the old man's nostrils, and he looked down in amazement. The change of his mood to one of joy was immediate. He snuffled and muttered and mumbled, making almost a croon of delight, as he began to eat. Of this the boys took little notice, for it was an accustomed spectacle. Nor did they notice his occasional exclamations and utterances of phrases which meant nothing to them, as, for instance, when he smacked his lips and champed his gums while muttering:

"Mayonnaise! Just think—mayonnaise! And it's sixty years since the last was made! Two generations and never a smell of it! Why, in those days it was served in every restaurant with crab."

When he could eat no more, the old man sighed, wiped his hands on his naked legs, and gazed out over the sea. With the content of a full stomach, he waxed reminiscent.

"To think of it! I've seen this beach alive with men, women, and children on a pleasant Sunday. And there weren't any bears to eat them up, either. And right up there on the cliff was a big restaurant where you could get anything you wanted to eat. Four million people lived in San Francisco, then. And now, in the whole city and county there aren't forty, all told. And out there on the sea were ships and ships always to be seen, going in for the Golden Gate or coming out. And airships in the air—dirigibles and flying machines. They could travel two hundred miles an hour.

"The mail contracts with the New York and San Francisco Limited demanded that for the minimum. There was a chap, a Frenchman, I forget his name, who succeeded in making three hundred; but the thing was risky, too risky for conservative persons. But he was on the right clew, and he would have managed it if it hadn't been for the Great Plague. When I was a boy, there were men alive who remembered the coming of the first aeroplanes, and now I have lived to see the last of them, and that sixty years ago."

The old man babbled on, unheeded by the boys, who were long accustomed to his garrulousness, and whose vocabularies, besides, lacked the greater portion of the words he used. It was noticeable that in these rambling soliloquies his English seemed to recrudesce into better construction and phraseology. But when he talked directly with the boys it lapsed, largely into their own uncouth and simpler forms.

"But there weren't many crabs in those days," the old man wandered on. "They were fished out, and they were great delicacies. The open season was only a month long, too. And now crabs are accessible the whole year around. Think of it—catching all the crabs you want, any time you want, in the surf of the Cliff House beach!"

A sudden commotion among the goats brought the boys to their feet. The dogs about the fire rushed to join their snarling fellow who guarded the goats, while the goats themselves stampeded in the direction of their human protectors. A half dozen forms, lean and gray, glided about on the sand hillocks or faced the bristling dogs. Edwin arched an arrow that fell short. But Hare-Lip, with a sling such as David carried into battle against Goliath, hurled a stone through the air that whistled from the speed of its flight. It fell squarely among the wolves and caused them to slink away toward the dark depths of the eucalyptus forest.

The boys laughed and lay down again in the sand, while Granser sighed ponderously. He had eaten too much, and, with hands clasped on his paunch, the fingers interlaced, he resumed his maunderings.

"'The fleeting systems lapse like foam,'" he mumbled what was evidently a quotation. "That's it—foam, and fleeting. All man's toil upon the planet was just so much foam. He domesticated the serviceable animals, destroyed the hostile ones, and cleared the land of its wild vegetation. And then he passed, and the flood of primordial life rolled back again, sweeping his handiwork away—the weeds and the forest inundated his fields, the beasts of prey swept over his flocks, and now there are wolves on the Cliff House beach." He was appalled by the thought. "Where four million people disported themselves, the wild wolves roam to-day, and our savage progeny, with prehistoric weapons, defend themselves against the fanged despoilers. Think of it! And all because of the Scarlet Death—"

The adjective had caught Hare-Lip's ear.

"He's always saying that," he said to Edwin. "What is *scarlet?*"

"'The scarlet of the maples can shake me like the cry of bugles going by,'" the old man quoted.

"It's red," Edwin answered the question. "And you don't know it because you come from the Chauffeur Tribe. They never did know nothing, none of them. *Scarlet* is red—I know that."

"RED is red, ain't it?" Hare-Lip grumbled. "Then what's the good of gettin' cocky and calling it scarlet?"

"Granser, what for do you always say so much what nobody knows?" he asked. "Scarlet ain't anything, but red is red. Why don't you say red, then?"

"Red is not the right word," was the reply. "The plague was scarlet. The whole face and body turned scarlet in an hour's time. Don't I know? Didn't I see enough of it? And I am telling you it was scarlet because—well, because it *was* scarlet. There is no other word for it."

"Red is good enough for me," Hare-Lip muttered obstinately. "My dad calls red red, and he ought to know. He says everything died of the Red Death."

"Your dad is a common fellow, descended from a common fellow," Granser retorted heatedly. "Don't I know the beginnings of the Chauffeurs? Your grandsire was a chauffeur, a servant, and without education. He worked for other persons. But your grandmother was of good stock, only the children did not take after her. Don't I remember when I first met them, catching fish at Lake Temescal?"

"What is *education?*" Edwin asked.

"Calling red scarlet," Hare-Lip sneered, then returned to the attack on Granser. "My dad told me, an' he got it from his dad afore he croaked, that your wife was a Santa Rosan, an' that she was no account. He said she was a *hash-slinger* before the Red Death, though I don't know what a *hash-slinger* is. You can tell me, Edwin."

But Edwin shook his head in token of ignorance.

"It is true, she was a waitress," Granser acknowledged. "But she was a good woman, and your mother was her daughter. Women were very scarce in the days after the Plague. She was the only wife I could find, even if she was a *hash-slinger,* as your father calls it. But it is not nice to talk about our progenitors that way."

"Dad says that the wife of the first Chauffeur was a *lady—*"

"What's a *lady?*" Hoo-Hoo demanded.

"A *lady's* a Chauffeur squaw," was the quick reply of Hare-Lip.

"The first Chauffeur was Bill, a common fellow, as I said before," the old man expounded; "but his wife was a lady, a great lady. Before the Scarlet Death she was the wife of Van Worden. He was President of the Board of Industrial Magnates, and was one of the dozen men who ruled America. He was worth one billion, eight hundred millions of dollars—coins like you have

there in your pouch, Edwin. And then came the Scarlet Death, and his wife became the wife of Bill, the first Chauffeur. He used to beat her, too. I have seen it myself."

Hoo-Hoo, lying on his stomach and idly digging his toes in the sand, cried out and investigated, first, his toenail, and next, the small hole he had dug. The other two boys joined him, excavating the sand rapidly with their hands till there lay three skeletons exposed. Two were of adults, the third being that of a part-grown child. The old man hudged along the ground and peered at the find.

"Plague victims," he announced. "That's the way they died everywhere in the last days. This must have been a family, running away from the contagion and perishing here on the Cliff House beach. They—what are you doing, Edwin?"

This question was asked in sudden dismay, as Edwin, using the back of his hunting knife, began to knock out the teeth from the jaws of one of the skulls.

"Going to string 'em," was the response.

The three boys were now hard at it; and quite a knocking and hammering arose, in which Granser babbled on unnoticed.

"You are true savages. Already has begun the custom of wearing human teeth. In another generation you will be perforating your noses and ears and wearing ornaments of bone and shell. I know. The human race is doomed to sink back farther and farther into the primitive night ere again it begins its bloody climb upward to civilization. When we increase and feel the lack of room, we will proceed to kill one another. And then I suppose you will wear human scalp-locks at your waist, as well—as you, Edwin, who are the gentlest of my grandsons, have already begun with that vile pigtail. Throw it away, Edwin, boy; throw it away."

"What a gabble the old geezer makes," Hare-Lip remarked, when, the teeth all extracted, they began an attempt at equal division.

They were very quick and abrupt in their actions, and their speech, in moments of hot discussion over the allotment of the choicer teeth, was truly a gabble. They spoke in monosyllables and short jerky sentences that was more a gibberish than a language. And yet, through it ran hints of grammatical construction, and appeared vestiges of the conjugation of some superior culture. Even the speech of Granser was so corrupt that were it put down literally it would be almost so much nonsense to the reader. This, however, was when he talked with the boys. When he got the full swing of babbling to himself, it slowly purged itself into pure English. The sentences grew longer and were enunciated with a rhythm and ease that was reminiscent of the lecture platform.

"Tell us about the Red Death, Granser," Hare-Lip demanded, when the teeth affair had been satisfactorily concluded.

"The Scarlet Death," Edwin corrected.

"An' don't work all that funny lingo on us," Hare-Lip went on. "Talk sensible, Granser, like a Santa Rosan ought to talk. Other Santa Rosans don't talk like you."

CHAPTER II

THE old man showed pleasure in being thus called upon. He cleared his throat and began.

"Twenty or thirty years ago my story was in great demand. But in these days nobody seems interested—"

"There you go!" Hare-Lip cried hotly. "Cut out the funny stuff and talk sensible. What's *interested?* You talk like a baby that don't know how."

"Let him alone," Edwin urged, "or he'll get mad and won't talk at all. Skip the funny places. We'll catch on to some of what he tells us."

"Let her go, Granser," Hoo-Hoo encouraged; for the old man was already maundering about the disrespect for elders and the reversion to cruelty of all humans that fell from high culture to primitive conditions.

The tale began.

"There were very many people in the world in those days. San Francisco alone held four millions—"

"What is millions?" Edwin interrupted.

Granser looked at him kindly.

"I know you cannot count beyond ten, so I will tell you. Hold up your two hands. On both of them you have altogether ten fingers and thumbs. Very well. I now take this grain of sand—you hold it, Hoo-Hoo." He dropped the grain of sand into the lad's palm and went on. "Now that grain of sand stands for the ten fingers of Edwin. I add another grain. That's ten more fingers. And I add another, and another, and another, until I have added as many grains as Edwin has fingers and thumbs. That makes what I call one hundred.

"Remember that word—one hundred. Now I put this pebble in Hare-Lip's hand. It stands for ten grains of sand, or ten tens of fingers, or one hundred fingers. I put in ten pebbles. They stand for a thousand

fingers. I take a mussel-shell, and it stands for ten pebbles, or one hundred grains of sand, or one thousand fingers. . . ."

And so on, laboriously, and with much reiteration, he strove to build up in their minds a crude conception of numbers. As the quantities increased, he had the boys holding different magnitudes in each of their hands. For still higher sums, he laid the symbols on the log of driftwood; and for symbols he was hard put, being compelled to use the teeth from the skulls for millions, and the crabshells for billions. It was here that he stopped, for the boys were showing signs of becoming tired.

"There were four million people in San Francisco—four teeth."

The boys' eyes ranged along from the teeth and from hand to hand, down through the pebbles and sand-grains to Edwin's fingers. And back again they ranged along the ascending series in the effort to grasp such inconceivable numbers.

"That was a lot of folks, Granser," Edwin at last hazarded.

"Like sand on the beach here, like sand on the beach, each grain of sand a man, or woman, or child. Yes, my boy, all those people lived right here in San Francisco. And at one time or another all those people came out on this very beach—more people than there are grains of sand. More —more—more. And San Francisco was a noble city. And across the bay—where we camped last year, even more people lived, clear from Point Richmond, on the level ground and on the hills, all the way around to San Leandro—one great city of seven million people. —Seven teeth there, that's it, seven millions."

Again the boys' eyes ranged up and down from Edwin's fingers to the teeth on the log.

"The world was full of people. The census of 2010 gave eight billions for the whole world—eight crab-shells, yes, eight billions. It was not like to-day. Mankind knew a great deal more about getting food. And the more food there was, the more people there were. In the year 1800, there were one hundred and seventy millions in Europe alone. One hundred years later—a grain of sand, Hoo-Hoo—one hundred years later, at 1900, there were five hundred millions in Europe—five grains of sand, Hoo-Hoo, and this one tooth.

"This shows how easy was the getting of food, and how men increased. And in the year 2000, there were fifteen hundred millions in Europe. And it was the same all over the rest of the world. Eight crab-shells there, yes, eight billion people were alive on the earth when the Scarlet Death began.

"I was a young man when the Plague came—twenty-seven years old; and I lived on the other side of San Francisco Bay, in Berkeley. You remember those great stone houses, Edwin, when we came down the hills from Contra Costa? That was where I lived, in those stone houses. I was a professor of English literature."

MUCH of this was over the heads of the boys, but they strove to comprehend dimly this tale of the past.

"What was them stone houses for?" Hare-Lip queried.

"You remember when your dad taught you to swim?" The boy nodded. "Well, in the University of California—that is the name we had for the houses—we taught young men and women how to think, just as I have taught you now, by sand and pebbles and shells, to know how many people lived in those days. There was very much to teach. The young men and women we taught were called students. We had large rooms in which we taught. I talked to them, forty or fifty at a time, just as I am talking to you now. I told them about the books other men had written before their time, and even, sometimes, in their time—"

"Was that all you did—just talk, talk, talk?" Hoo-Hoo demanded. "Who hunted your meat for you? And milked the goats? And caught the fish?"

"A sensible question, Hoo-Hoo, a sensible question. As I have told you, in those days food-getting was easy. We were very wise. A few men got the food for many men. The other men did other things. As you say, I talked. I talked all the time, and for this food was given me—much food, fine food, beautiful food, food that I have not tasted in sixty years and shall never taste again. I sometimes think the most wonderful achievement of our tremendous civilization was food—its inconceivable abundance, its infinite variety, its marvelous delicacy. O my grandsons, life was life in those days, when we had such wonderful things to eat."

This was beyond the boys, and they let it slip by, words and thoughts, as a mere senile wandering in the narrative.

"Our food-getters were called *freemen*. This was a joke. We of the ruling classes owned all the land, all the machines, everything. These food-getters were our slaves. We took almost all the food they got, and left them a little so that they

might eat, and work, and get us more food—"

"I'd have gone into the forest and got food for myself," Hare-Lip announced; "and if any man tried to take it away from me, I'd have killed him."

The old man laughed.

"Did I not tell you that we of the ruling class owned all the land, all the forest, everything? Any food-getter who would not get food for us, him we punished or compelled to starve to death. And very few did that. They preferred to get food for us, and make clothes for us, and prepare and administer to us a thousand—a mussel-shell, Hoo-Hoo—a thousand satisfactions and delights. And I was Professor Smith in those days—Professor James Howard Smith. And my lecture courses were very popular—that is, very many of the young men and women liked to hear me talk about the books other men had written.

"And I was very happy, and I had beautiful things to eat. And my hands were soft, because I did no work with them, and my body was clean all over and dressed in the softest garments—" He surveyed his mangy goat-skin with disgust. "We did not wear such things in those days. Even the slaves had better garments. And we were most clean. We washed our faces and hands often every day. You boys never wash unless you fall into the water or go in swimming."

"Neither do you, Granser," Hoo-Hoo retorted.

"I know, I know. I am a filthy old man. But times have changed. Nobody washes these days, and there are no conveniences. it is sixty years since I have seen a piece of soap. You do not know what soap is, and I shall not tell you, for I am telling the story of the Scarlet Death. You know what sickness is. We called it a disease. Very many of the diseases came from what we called germs. Remember that word—germs. A germ is a very small thing. It is like a woodtick, such as you find on the dogs in the spring of the year when they run in the forest. Only the germ is very small. It is so small that you cannot see it—"

Hoo-Hoo began to laugh.

"You're a queer un, Granser, talking about things you can't see. If you can't see 'em, how do you know they are? That's what I want to know. How do you know anything you can't see?"

"A good question, a very good question, Hoo-Hoo. But we did see—some of them. We had what we called microscopes and ultramicroscopes, and we put them to our eyes and looked through them, so that we saw things larger than they really were, and many things we could not see without the microscopes at all. Our best ultramicroscopes could make a germ look forty thousand times larger. A mussel-shell is a thousand fingers like Edwin's. Take forty mussel-shells, and by as many times larger was the germ when we looked at it through a microscope. And after that, we had other ways, by using what we called moving pictures, of making the forty-thousand-times germ many, many thousand times larger still.

"And thus we saw these things which our eyes of themselves could not see. Take a grain of sand. Break it into ten pieces. Take one piece and break it into ten. Break one of those pieces into ten, and one of those into ten, and one of those into ten, and one of those into ten, and do it all day, and maybe, by sunset, you will have a piece as small as one of the germs."

The boys were openly incredulous. Hare-Lip sniffed and sneered and Hoo-Hoo snickered, until Edwin nudged them to be silent.

"The woodtick sucks the blood of the dog, but the germ, being so very small, goes right into the blood of the body, and there it has many children. In those days there would be as many as a billion—a crab-shell, please—as many as that crab-shell in one man's body. We called germs micro-organisms. When a few million, or a billion, of them were in a man, in all the blood of a man, he was sick. These germs were a disease.

There were many different kinds of them—more different kinds than there are grains of sand on this beach. We knew only a few of the kinds. The micro-organic world was an invisible world, a world we could not see, and we knew very little about it. Yet we did know something. There was the *bacillus anthracis;* there was the *micrococcus;* there was the *Bacterium termo,* and the *Bacterium lactis*—that's what turns the goat milk sour even to this day, Hare-Lip; and there was *Schizomycetes* without end. And there were many others. ."

Here the old man launched into a disquisition on germs and their natures, using words and phrases of such extraordinary length and meaninglessness, that the boys grinned at one another and looked out over the deserted ocean till they forgot the old man was babbling on.

"But the Scarlet Death, Granser," Edwin at last suggested.

GRANSER recollected himself, and with a start tore himself away from the rostrum of the lecture-hall, where to another-world audience, he had been expounding the latest theory, sixty years gone, of germs and germ-diseases.

"Yes, yes, Edwin; I had forgotten. Sometimes the memory of the past is very strong upon me, and I forget that I am a dirty old man, clad in goat-skin, wandering with my savage grandsons who are goat-herds in the primeval wilderness. 'The fleeting systems lapse like foam,' and so lapsed our glorious, colossal civilization. I am Granser, a tired old man. I belong to the tribe of Santa Rosans. I married into that tribe. My sons and daughters married into the Chauffeurs, the Sacramentos, and the Palo-Altos. You, Hare-Lip, are of the Chauffeurs. You, Edwin, are of the Sacramentos. And you, Hoo-Hoo, are of the Palo-Altos. Your tribe takes its name from a town that was near the seat of another great institution of learning. It was called Stanford University. Yes, I remember now. It is perfectly clear. I was telling you of the Scarlet Death. Where was I in my story?"

"You was telling about germs, the things you can't see but which make men sick," Edwin prompted.

"Yes, that's where I was. A man did not notice at first when only a few of these germs got into his body. But each germ broke in half and became two germs, and they kept doing this very rapidly so that in a short time there were many millions of them in the body. Then the man was sick. He had a disease, and the disease was named after the kind of a germ that was in him. It might be measles, it might be influenza, it might be yellow fever; it might be any of thousands and thousands of kinds of diseases.

"Now this is the strange thing about these germs. There were always new ones coming to live in men's bodies. Long and long and long ago, when there were only a few men in the world, there were few diseases. But as men increased and lived closely together in great cities and civilizations, new diseases arose, new kinds of germs entered their bodies.

"Thus were countless millions and billions of human beings killed. And the more thickly men packed together, the more terrible were the new diseases that came to be. Long before my time, in the middle ages, there was the Black Plague that swept across Europe. It swept across Europe many times. There was tuberculosis, that entered into men wherever they were thickly packed. A hundred years before my time there was the bubonic plague. And in Africa was the sleeping sickness. The bacteriologists fought all these sicknesses and destroyed them, just as you boys fight the wolves away from your goats, or squash the mosquitoes that light on you. The bacteriologists—"

"But Granser, what is a what-you-call-it?" Edwin interrupted.

"You, Edwin, are a goat-herd. Your task is to watch the goats. You know a great deal about goats. A bacteriologist watches germs. That's his task, and he knows a great deal about them. So, as I was saying, the bacteriologists fought with the germs and destroyed them—sometimes. There was leprosy, a horrible disease. A hundred years before I was born, the bacteriologists discovered the germ of leprosy. They knew all about it. They made pictures of it. I have seen those pictures. But they never found a way to kill it.

"But in 1984, there was the Pantoblast Plague, a disease that broke out in a country called Brazil and that killed millions of people. But the bacteriologists found it out, and found the way to kill it, so that the Pantoblast Plague went no farther. They made what they called a serum, which they put into a man's body and which killed the Pantoblast germs without killing the man. And in 1910, there was Pellagra, and also the hook worm. These were easily killed by the bacteriologists. But in 1947 there arose a new disease that had never been seen before. It got into the bodies of babies of only ten months old or less, and it made them unable to move their hands and feet, or to eat, or anything; and the bacteriologists were eleven years in discovering how to kill that particular germ and save the babies.

"In spite of all these diseases, and of all the new ones that continued to arise, there were more and more men in the world. This was because it was easy to get food. The easier it was to get food, the more men there were, the more thickly were they packed together on the earth; and the more thickly they were packed, the more new kinds of germs became diseases. There were warnings. Soldervetzsky, as early as 1929, told the bacteriologists that they had no guaranty against some new disease, a thousand times more deadly than any they knew, arising and killing by the hundreds of millions and even by the billions.

"You see, the micro-organic world remained a mystery to the end. They knew there was such a world, and that from time

to time armies of new germs emerged from it to kill men. And that was all they knew about it. For all they knew, in that invisible micro-organic world there might be as many different kinds of germs as there are grains of sand on this beach. And also, in that same invisible world it might well be that new kinds of germs came to be. It might be there that life originated—the 'abysmal fecundity.' Soldervetzsky called it, applying the words of other men who had written before him. . . ."

It was at this point that Hare-Lip rose to his feet, an expression of huge contempt on his face.

"Granser," he announced, "you make me sick with your gabble. Why don't you tell about the Red Death? If you ain't going to, say so, an' we'll start back for camp."

The old man looked at him and silently began to cry. The weak tears of age rolled down his cheeks, and all the feebleness of his eighty-seven years showed in his grief-stricken countenance.

"Sit down," Edwin counselled soothingly. "Granser's all right. He's just gettin' to the Scarlet Death, ain't you, Granser? He's just goin' to tell us about it right now. Sit down, Hare-Lip. Go ahead, Granser."

THE old man wiped the tears away on his grimy knuckles and took up the tale in a tremulous, piping voice that soon strengthened as he got the swing of the narrative.

"It was in the summer of 2013 that the Plague came. I was twenty-seven years old, and well do I remember it. Wireless despatches—"

Hare-Lip spat loudly his disgust, and Granser hastened to make amends.

"We talked through the air in those days, thousands and thousands of miles. And the word came of a strange disease that had broken out in New York. There were seventeen millions of people living then in that noblest city of America. Nobody thought anything about the news. It was only a small thing. There had been only a few deaths. It seemed, though, that they had died very quickly, and that one of the first signs of the disease was the turning red of the face and all the body. Within twenty-four hours came the report of the first case in Chicago. And on the same day, it was made public that London, the greatest city in the world, next to Chicago, had been secretly fighting the plague for two weeks and censoring the news despatches—that is, not permitting the word to go forth to the rest of the world that London had the plague.

"It looked serious, but we in California, like everywhere else, were not alarmed. We were sure that the bacteriologists would find a way to overcome this new germ, just as they had overcome other germs in the past. But the trouble was the astonishing quickness with which this germ destroyed human beings, and the fact that it inevitably killed any human body it entered. No one ever recovered.

"There was the old Asiatic cholera, when you might eat dinner with a well man in the evening, and the next morning, if you got up early enough, you would see him being hauled by your window in the death-cart. But this new plague was quicker than that—much quicker. From the moment of the first signs of it, a man would be dead in an hour. Some lasted for several hours. Many died within ten or fifteen minutes of the appearance of the first signs.

"The heart began to beat faster and the heat of the body to increase. Then came the scarlet rash, spreading like wildfire over the face and body. Most persons never noticed the increase in heat and heart-beat, and the first they knew was when the scarlet rash came out. Usually, they had convulsions at the time of the appearance of the rash. But these convulsions did not last long and were not very severe. If one lived through them, he became perfectly quiet, and only did he feel a numbness swiftly creeping up his body from the feet.

"The heels became numb first, then the legs, and hips, and when the numbness reached as high as his heart he died. They did not rave or sleep. Their minds always remained cool and calm up to the moment their heart numbed and stopped. And another strange thing was the rapidity of decomposition. No sooner was a person dead than the body seemed to fall to pieces, to fly apart, to melt away even as you looked at it. That was one of the reasons the plague spread so rapidly. All the billions of germs in a corpse were so immediately released.

"And it was because of all this that the bacteriologists had so little chance in fighting the germs. They were killed in their laboratories even as they studied the germ of the Scarlet Death. They were heroes. As fast as they perished, others stepped forth and took their places. It was in London that they first isolated it.

The news was telegraphed everywhere. Trask was the name of the man who succeeded in this, but within thirty hours he was dead. Then came the struggle in all the laboratories to find something that would kill the plague germs. All drugs failed. You see, the problem was to get a drug, or serum, that would kill the germs in the body and not kill the body. They tried to fight it with other germs, to put into the body of a sick man germs that were the enemies of the plague germs—"

"And you can't see these germ-things, Granser," Hare-Lip objected, "and here you gabble, gabble, gabble about them as if they was anything, when they're nothing at all. Anything you can't see, ain't, that's what. Fighting things that ain't with things that ain't! They must have been all fools in them days. That's why they croaked. I ain't goin' to believe in such rot, I tell you that."

Granser promptly began to weep, while Edwin hotly took up his defense.

"Look here, Hare-Lip, you believe in lots of things you can't see."

Hare-Lip shook his head.

"You believe in dead men walking about. You never seen one dead man walk about."

"I tell you I seen 'em, last winter, when I was wolf-hunting with dad."

"Well, you always spit when you cross running water," Edwin challenged.

"That's to keep off bad luck," was Hare-Lip's defense.

"You believe in bad luck?"

"An' you ain't never seen bad luck," Edwin concluded triumphantly. "You're just as bad as Granser and his germs. You believe in what you don't see. Go on, Granser."

HARE-LIP, crushed by this metaphysical defeat, remained silent, and the old man went on. Often and often, though this narrative must not be clogged by the details, was Granser's tale interrupted while the boys squabbled among themselves. Also, among themselves they kept up a constant, low-voiced exchange of explanation and conjecture, as they strove to follow the old man into his unknown and vanished world.

"The Scarlet Death broke out in San Francisco. The first death came on a Monday morning. By Thursday they were dying like flies in Oakland and San Francisco. They died everywhere—in their beds, at their work, walking along the street. It was on Tuesday that I saw my first death—Miss Collbran, one of my students, sitting right there before my eyes, in my lecture-room. I noticed her face while I was talking. It had suddenly turned scarlet.

"I ceased speaking and could only look at her, for the first fear of the plague was already on all of us and we knew that it had come. The young women screamed and ran out of the room. So did the young men run out, all but two. Miss Collbran's convulsions were very mild and lasted less than a miunte. One of the young men fetched her a glass of water. She drank only a little bit of it, and cried out:

"'My feet! All sensation has left them.'

"After a minute she said, 'I have no feet. I am unaware that I have feet. And my knees are cold. I can scarcely feel that I have knees.'

"She lay on the floor, a bundle of notebooks under her head. And we could do nothing. The coldness and the numbness crept up past her hips to her heart, and when it reached her heart she was dead. In fifteen minutes, by the clock—I timed it—she was dead, there, in my own classroom, dead. And she was a very beautiful, strong, healthy young woman. And from the first sign of the plague to her death only fifteen minutes elapsed. That will show you how swift was the Scarlet Death.

"Yet in those few minutes I remained with the dying woman in my classroom, the alarm had spread over the university; and the students by thousands, all of them, had deserted the lecture-room and laboratories. When I emerged, on my way to make report to the President of the Faculty, I found the university deserted. Across the campus were several stragglers hurrying for their homes. Two of them were running.

"President Hoag, I found in his office, all alone, looking very old and very gray, with a multitude of wrinkles in his face that I had never seen before. At sight of me, he pulled himself to his feet and tottered away to the inner office, banging the door after him and locking it. You see, he knew I had been exposed, and he was afraid. He shouted to me through the door to go away. I shall never forget my feelings as I walked down the silent corridors and out across that deserted campus. I was not afraid. I had been exposed and I looked upon myself as already dead. It was not that, but a feeling of awful depression that impressed me. Everything had stopped.

"It was like the end of the world to me

—my world. I had been born within sight and sound of the university. It had been my predestined career. My father had been a professor there before me, and his father before him. For a century and a half had this university, like a splendid machine, been running steadily on. And now, in an instant, it had stopped. It was like seeing the sacred flame die down on some thrice-sacred altar. I was shocked, unutterably shocked.

"When I arrived home, my housekeeper screamed as I entered and fled away. And when I rang, I found the housemaid had likewise fled. I investigated. In the kitchen I found the cook on the point of departure. But she screamed, too, and in her haste dropped a suitcase of her personal belongings and ran out of the house and across the grounds, still screaming. I can hear her scream to this day.

"You see, we did not act in this way when ordinary disease smote us. We were always calm over such things. and sent for the doctors and nurses who knew just what to do. But this was different. It struck so suddenly, and killed so swiftly, and never missed a stroke. When the scarlet rash appeared on a person's face, that person was marked by death. There was never a known case of a recovery.

"I was alone in my big house. As I have told you often before, in those days we could talk with one another over wires or through the air. The telephone bell rang, and I found my brother talking to me. He told me that he was not coming home for fear of catching the plague from me, and that he had taken our two sisters to stop at Professor Bacon's home. He advised me to remain where I was, and wait to find out whether or not I had caught the plague.

"To all of this I agreed, staying in my house and for the first time in my life attempting to cook. And the plague did not come out on me. By means of the telephone I could talk with whomsoever I pleased and get the news. Also, there were the newspapers, and I ordered all of them to be thrown up to my door so that I could know what was happening with the rest of the world.

"NEW YORK CITY and Chicago were in chaos. And what happened with them was happening in all the large cities. A third of the New York police were dead. Their chief was also dead, likewise the mayor. All law and order had ceased. The bodies were lying in the streets unburied. All railroads and vessels carrying food and such things into the great city had ceased running, and mobs of the hungry poor were pillaging the stores and warehouses. Murder and robbery and drunkenness were everywhere.

"Already the people had fled from the city by millions—at first the rich, in their private motor-cars and dirigibles, and then the great mass of the population, on foot, carrying the plague with them, themselves starving and pillaging the farmers and all the towns and villages on the way.

"The man who sent this news, the wireless operator, was alone with his instrument on the top of a loft building. The people remaining in the city—he estimated them at several hundred thousand—had gone mad from fear and drink, and on all sides of him great fires were raging. He was a hero, the man who staid by his post—an obscure newspaperman, most likely.

"For twenty-four hours, he said, no transatlantic airships had arrived, and no more messages were coming from England. He did state, though, that a message from Berlin—that's in Germany—announced that Hoffmeyer, a bacteriologist of the Metchnikoff School, had discovered the serum for the plague. That was the last word, to this day, that we of America ever received from Europe.

"If Hoffmeyer discovered the serum, it was too late, or otherwise, long ere this, explorers from Europe would have come looking for us. We can only conclude that what happened in America happened in Europe, and that, at the best, some several score may have survived the Scarlet Death on that whole continent.

"For one day longer the dispatches continued to come from New York. Then they, too, ceased. The man who had sent them, perched in his lofty building, had either died of the plague or been consumed in the great conflagrations he had described as raging around him. And what had occurred in New York had been duplicated in all the other cities. It was the same in San Francisco, and Oakland, and Berkeley. By Thursday the people were dying so rapidly that their corpses could not be handled, and dead bodies lay everywhere. Thursday night the panic outrush for the country began. Imagine, my grandsons, people, thicker than the salmon-run you have seen on the Sacramento River, pouring out of the cities by millions, madly over the country, in vain attempt to escape the ubiquitous death. You see,

they carried the germs with them. Even the airships of the rich, fleeing for mountain and desert fastnesses, carried the germs.

"Hundreds of these airships escaped to Hawaii, and not only did they bring the plague with them, but they found the plague already there before them. This we learned, by the despatches, until all order in San Francisco vanished, and there were no operators left at their posts to receive or send. It was amazing, astounding, this loss of communication with the world. It was exactly as if the world had ceased, been blotted out.

"For sixty years that world has no longer existed for me. I know there must be such places as New York, Europe, Asia, and Africa; but not one word has been heard of them—not in sixty years. With the coming of the Scarlet Death the world fell apart, absolutely, irretrievably. Ten thousand years of culture and civilization passed in the twinkling of an eye, 'lapsed like foam.'

"I was telling about the airships of the rich. They carried the plague with them and no matter where they fled, they died. I never encountered but one survivor of any of them—Mungerson. He was afterwards a Santa Rosan, and he married my eldest daughter. He came into the tribe eight years after the plague. He was then nineteen years old, and he was compelled to wait twelve years more before he could marry. You see, there were no unmarried women, and some of the older daughters of the Santa Rosans were already bespoken. So he was forced to wait until my Mary had grown to sixteen years. It was his son, Gimp-Leg, who was killed last year by the mountain lion.

"Mungerson was eleven years old at the time of the plague. His father was one of the Industrial Magnates, a very wealthy, powerful man. It was on his airship, the Condor, that they were fleeing, with all the family, for the wilds of British Columbia, which is far to the north of here. But there was some accident, and they were wrecked near Mount Shasta. You have heard of that mountain. It is far to the north. The plague broke out amongst them, and this boy of eleven was the only survivor. For eight years he was alone, wandering over a deserted land and looking vainly for his own kind. And at last, travelling south, he picked up with us, the Santa Rosans.

"But I am ahead of my story. When the great exodus from the cities around San Francisco Bay began, and while the telephones were still working, I talked with my brother. I told him this flight from the cities was insanity, that there were no symptoms of the plague in me, and that the thing for us to do was to isolate ourselves and our relatives in some safe place. We decided on the Chemistry Building, at the university, and we planned to lay in a supply of provisions, and by force of arms to prevent any other persons from forcing their presence upon us after we had retired to our refuge.

"ALL this being arranged, my brother begged me to stay in my own house for at least twenty-four hours more, on the chance of the plague developing in me. To this I agreed, and he promised to come for me next day. We talked on over the details of the provisioning and the defending of the Chemistry Building until the telephone died. It died in the midst of our conversation. That evening there were no electric lights, and I was alone in my house in the darkness.

"No more newspapers were being printed, so I had no knowledge of what was taking place outside. I heard sounds of rioting and of pistol shots, and from my windows I could see the glare of the sky of some conflagration in the direction of Oakland. It was a night of terror. I did not sleep a wink. A man—why and how I do not know—was killed on the sidewalk in front of the house. I heard the rapid reports of an automatic pistol, and a few minutes later the wounded wretch crawled up to my door, moaning and crying out for help.

"Arming myself with two automatics, I went to him. By the light of a match I ascertained that while he was dying of the bullet wounds, at the same time the plague was on him. I fled indoors, whence I heard him moan and cry out for half an hour longer.

"In the morning, my brother came to me. I had gathered into a handbag what things of value I purposed taking, but when I saw his face I knew that he would never accompany me to the Chemistry Building. The plague was on him. He intended shaking my hand, but I went back hurriedly before him.

"Look at yourself in the mirror," I commanded.

"He did so, and at sight of his scarlet face, the color deepening as he looked at it, he sank down nervelessly in a chair.

"'My God!' he said. 'I've got it. Don't

come near me. I am already a dead man.'

"Then the convulsions seized him. He was two hours in dying, and he was conscious to the last, complaining about the coldness and loss of sensation in his feet, his calves, his thighs, until at last it was his heart and he was dead.

"That was the way the Scarlet Death slew. I caught up my handbag and fled. The sights in the streets were terrible. One stumbled on bodies everywhere. Some were not yet dead. And even as you looked, you saw men sink down with the death fastened upon them. There were numerous fires burning in Berkeley, while Oakland and San Francisco were apparently swept by vast conflagrations. The smoke of the burning filled the heavens, so that the midday was a gloomy twilight, and, in the shifts of wind, sometimes the sun shone through dimly, a dull red orb. Truly, my grandsons, it was like the last days of the end of the world.

"There were numerous stalled motor cars, showing that the gasoline and the engine supplies of the garage had given out.

"I remember one such car. A man and a woman lay back dead in the seats, and on the pavement near it were two more women and a child. Strange and terrible sights there were on every hand. People slipped by silently, furtively, like ghosts—white-faced women carrying infants in their arms, fathers leading children by the hand; singly, and in couples, and in families—all fleeing out of the city of death. Some carried supplies of food, others blankets and valuables, and there were many who carried nothing.

"There was a grocery store—a place where food was sold. The man to whom it belonged—I knew him well—a quiet, sober, but stupid and obstinate fellow, was defending it. The windows and doors had been broken in, but he, inside, hiding behind a counter, was discharging his pistol at a number of men on the sidewalk who were breaking in. In the entrance were several bodies—of men, I decided, whom he had killed earlier in the day.

"Even as I looked on from a distance, I saw one of the robbers break the windows of the adjoining store, a place where shoes were sold, and deliberately set fire to it. I did not go to the grocery-man's assistance. The time for such acts had already passed.

"Civilization was crumbling, and it was each for himself.

CHAPTER III

"I WENT away hastily, down a cross-street, and at the first corner I saw another tragedy. Two men of the working class had caught a man and a woman with two children, and were robbing them. I knew the man by sight, though I had never been introduced to him. He was a poet whose verses I had long admired. Yet I did not go to his help, for at the moment I came upon the scene there was a pistol shot, and I saw him sinking to the ground. The woman screamed, and she was felled with a fist-blow by one of the brutes.

"I cried out threateningly, whereupon they discharged their pistols at me and I ran away around the corner. Here I was blocked by an advancing conflagration. The buildings on both sides were burning, and the street was filled with smoke and flame. From somewhere in that murk came a woman's voice calling shrilly for help. But I did not go to her. A man's heart turned to iron amid such scenes, and one heard all too many appeals for help.

"Returning to the corner, I found the two robbers were gone. The poet and his wife lay dead on the pavement. It was a shocking sight. The two children had vanished—whither I could not tell. And I knew, now, why it was that the fleeing persons I encountered slipped along so furtively and with such white faces. In the midst of our civilization, down in our slums we had bred a race of barbarians, of savages; and now, in the time of our calamity, they turned upon us like the wild beasts they were and destroyed us. And they destroyed themselves as well. They inflamed themselves with strong drink and committed a thousand atrocities, quarrelling and killing one another in the general madness.

"One group of workingmen I saw, of the better sort, who had banded together, and, with their women and children in their midst, the sick and aged in litters and being carried, and with a number of horses pulling a truck-load of provisions, they were fighting their way out of the city.

"They made a fine spectacle as they came down the street through the drifting smoke, though they nearly shot me when I first appeared in their path. As they went by, one of their leaders shouted out to me in apologetic explanation. He said they were killing the robbers and looters on sight, and that they had thus banded

"I repeat to you certain things which you must remember and tell to your children."

together as the only means by which to escape the prowlers.

"It was here that I saw for the first time what I was soon to see so often. One of the marching men had suddenly shown the unmistakable mark of the plague. Immediate those about him drew away, and he, without a remonstrance, stepped out of his place to let them pass on. A woman, most probably his wife, attempted to follow him. She was leading a little boy by the hand. But the husband commanded her sternly to go on, while others laid hands on her and restrained her from following him. This I saw, and I saw the man also, with his scarlet blaze of face, step into a doorway on the opposite side of the street. I heard the report of his pistol, and saw him sink lifeless to the ground.

"After being turned aside twice again by advancing fires, I succeeded in getting through to the university. On the edge of the campus I came upon a party of university folk who were going in the direction of the Chemistry Building. They were all family men, and their families were with them, including the nurses and the servants. Professor Badminton greeted me, and I had difficulty in recognizing him. Somewhere he had gone through flames, and his beard was singed off. About his head was a bloody bandage, and his clothes were filthy. He told me he had been cruelly beaten by prowlers, and that his brother had been killed the previous night, in the defence of their dwelling.

"Midway across the campus, he pointed suddenly to Mrs. Swinton's face. The unmistakable scarlet was there. Immediately all the other women set up a screaming and began to run away from her. Her two children were with a nurse, and these also ran with the women. But her husband, Doctor Swinton, remained with her.

"'Go on, Smith,' he told me. 'Keep an eye on the children. As for me, I shall stay with my wife. I know she is as already dead, but I can't leave her. Afterward, if I escape, I shall come to the Chemistry Building, and do you watch for me and let me in.'

"I left him bending over his wife and soothing her last moments, while I ran to overtake the party. We were the last to be admitted to the Chemistry Building. After that, with our automatic rifles we maintained our isolation. By our plans, we had arranged for a company of sixty to be in this refuge. Instead, every one of the number originally planned had added relatives and friends and whole families until there were over four hundred souls. But the Chemistry Building was large, and, standing by itself, was in no danger of being burned by the great fires that raged everywhere in the city.

"A large quantity of provisions had been gathered, and a food committee took charge of it, issuing rations daily to the various families and groups that arranged themselves into messes. A number of committees were appointed, and we developed a very efficient organization. I was on the committee of defence, though for the first day no prowlers came near. We could see them in the distance, however, and by the smoke of their fires knew that several camps of them were occupying the far edge of the campus.

"Drunkenness was rife, and often we heard them singing ribald songs or insanely shouting. While the world crashed to ruin about them and all the air was filled with the smoke of its burning, these low creatures gave rein to their bestiality and fought and drank and died. And after all, what did it matter? Everybody died anyway, the good and the bad, the efficient and the weaklings, those that loved to live and those that scorned to live. They passed. Everything passed.

"WHEN twenty-four hours had gone by and no signs of the plague were apparent, we congratulated ourselves and set about digging a well. You have seen the great iron pipes which in those days carried water to all the city-dwellers. We feared that the fires in the city would burst the pipes and empty the reservoirs. So we tore up the cement floor of the central court of the Chemistry Building and dug a well. There were many young men, undergraduates, with us, and we worked night and day on the well. And our fears were confirmed. Three hours before we reached water, the pipes went dry.

"A second twenty-four hours passed, and still the plague did not appear among us. We thought we were saved. But we did not know what I afterwards decided to be true, namely, that the period of the incubation of the plague germs in a human's body was a matter of a number of days. It slew so swiftly when once it manifested itself, that we were led to believe that the period of incubation was equally swift. So, when two days had left us unscathed, we were elated with the idea that we were free of the contagion.

"But the third day disillusioned us. I

can never forget the night preceding it. I had charge of the night guards from eight to twelve, and from the roof of the building I watched the passing of all man's glorious works. So terrible were the local conflagrations that all the sky was lighted up. One could read the finest print in the red glare. All the world seemed wrapped in flames. San Francisco spouted smoke and fire from the score of vast conflagrations that were like so many active volcanoes. Oakland, San Leandro, Haywards—all were burning; and to the northward, clear to Point Richmond, other fires were at work.

"It was an awe-inspiring spectacle. civilization was passing in a sheet of flame and a breath of death. At ten o'clock that night, the great powder magazines at Point Pinole exploded in rapid succession. So terrific were the concussions that the strong building rocked as in an earthquake, while every pane of glass was broken. It was then that I left the roof and went down the long corridors, from room to room, quieting the alarmed women and telling them what had happened.

"An hour later, at a window on the ground floor, I heard pandemonium break out in the camps of the prowlers. There were cries and screams, and shots from many pistols. As we afterward conjectured, this fight had been precipitated by an attempt on the part of those that were well to drive out those that were sick. At any rate, a number of the plague-stricken prowlers escaped across the campus and drifted against our doors. We warned them back, but they cursed us and discharged a fusillade from their pistols.

"Professor Merryweather, at one of the windows, was instantly killed, the bullet striking him squarely between the eyes. We opened fire in turn, and all the prowlers fled with the exception of three. One was a woman. The plague was on them and they were reckless. Like foul fiends, there in the red glare from the skies, with faces blazing, they continued to curse us and fire at us. One of the men I shot with my own hand. After that the other man and the woman, still cursing us, lay down under our windows where we were compelled to watch them die of the plague.

"The situation was critical. The explosions of the powder magazines had broken all the windows of the Chemistry Building, so that we were exposed to the germs from the corpses. The sanitary committee was called upon to act, and it responded nobly. Two men were required to go out and remove the corpses, and that meant the probable sacrifice of their own lives, for, having performed the task, they were not to be permitted to re-enter the building.

"One of the professors, who was a bachelor, and one of the undergraduates volunteered. They bade goodbye to us and went forth. They were heroes. They gave up their lives that four hundred others might live. After they had performed their work, they stood for a moment, at a distance, looking at us wistfully. Then they waved their hands in farewell and went away slowly across the campus toward the burning city.

"And yet it was all useless. The next morning the first one of us was smitten with the plague—a little nurse-girl in the family of Professor Stout. It was no time for weak-kneed, sentimental policies. On the chance that she might be the only one, we thrust her forth from the building and commanded her to be gone. She went away slowly across the campus, wringing her hands and crying pitifully. We felt like brutes, but what were we to do? There were four hundred of us, and individuals had to be sacrificed.

"In one of the laboratories three families had domiciled themselves, and that afternoon we found among them no less than four corpses and seven cases of the plague in all its different stages.

"THEN it was that the horror began. Leaving the dead lie, we forced the living ones to segregate themselves in another room. The plague began to break out among the rest of us, and as fast as the symptoms appeared, we sent the stricken ones to these segregated rooms. We compelled them to walk there by themselves, so as to avoid laying hands on them. It was heartrending. But still the plague raged among us, and room after room was filled with the dead and dying. And so we who were yet clean retreated to the next floor and to the next, before this sea of the dead, that, room by room and floor by floor, inundated the building.

"The place became a charnel house, and in the middle of the night the survivors fled forth, taking nothing with them except arms and ammunition and a heavy store of tinned foods. We camped on the opposite side of the campus from the prowlers, and, while some stood guard, others of us volunteered to scout into the city in quest of horses, motor cars, carts, and wagons, or anything that would carry our provisions and enable us to emulate the

banded workingmen I had seen fighting their way out to the open country.

"I was one of these scouts; and Doctor Hoyle, remembering that his motor car had been left behind in his home garage, told me to look for it. We scouted in pairs, and Dombey, a young undergraduate, accompanied me. We had to cross half a mile of the residence portion of the city to get to Doctor Hoyle's home. Here the buildings stood apart, in the midst of trees and grassy lawns and here the fires had played freaks, burning whole blocks, skipping blocks and often skipping a single house in a block. And here, too, the prowlers were still at their work.

"We carried our automatic pistols openly in our hands, and looked desperate enough, forsooth, to keep them from attacking us. But at Doctor Hoyle's house the thing happened. Untouched by fire, even as we came to it the smoke of flames burst forth.

"The miscreant who had set fire to it staggered down the steps and out along the driveway. Sticking out of his coat pockets were bottles of whiskey, and he was very drunk. My first impulse was to shoot him, and I have never ceased regretting that I did not. Staggering and maundering to himself, with bloodshot eyes, and a raw and bleeding slash down one side of his bewhiskered face, he was altogether the most nauseating specimen of degradation and filth I had ever encountered. I did not shoot him, and he leaned against a tree on the lawn to let us go by. It was the most absolute, wanton act. Just as we were opposite him, he suddenly drew a pistol and shot Dombey through the head. The next instant I shot him. But it was too late. Dombey expired without a groan, immediately. I doubt if he even knew what had happened to him.

"Leaving the two corpses, I hurried on past the burning house to the garage, and there found Doctor Hoyle's motor car. The tanks were filled with gasoline, and it was ready for use. And it was in this car that I threaded the streets of the ruined city and came back to the survivors on the campus. The other scouts returned, but none had been so fortunate. Professor Fairmead had found a Shetland pony, but the poor creature, tied in a stable and abandoned for days, was so weak from want of food and water that it could carry no burden at all. Some of the men were for turning it loose, but I insisted that we should lead it along with us, so that, if we got out of food, we would have it to eat.

"There were forty-seven of us when we started, many being women and children. The President of the Faculty, an old man to begin with, and now hopelessly broken by the awful happenings of the past week, rode in the motor car with several young children and the aged mother of Professor Fairmead. Wathope, a young professor of English, who had a grievous bullet-wound in his leg, drove the car. The rest of us walked, Professor Fairmead leading the pony.

"It was what should have been a bright summer day, but the smoke from the burning world filled the sky, through which the sun shone murkily, a dull and lifeless orb, blood-red and ominous. But we had grown accustomed to that blood-red sun. With the smoke it was different. It bit into our nostrils and eyes, and there was no one of us whose eyes were not bloodshot. We directed our course to the southeast through the endless miles of suburban residences, travelling along where the first swells of low hills rose from the flat of the central city. It was by this way, only, that we could expect to gain the country.

"Our progress was painfully slow. The women and children could not walk fast. They did not dream of walking, my grandsons, in the way all people walk to-day. In truth, none of us knew how to walk. It was not until after the plague that I learned really to walk. So it was that the pace of the slowest was the pace of all, for we dared not separate on account of the prowlers. There were not so many now of these human beasts of prey. The plague had already well diminished their numbers, but enough still lived to be a constant menace to us. Many of the beautiful residences were untouched by fire, yet smoking ruins were everywhere. The prowlers, too, seemed to have got over their insensate desire to burn, and it was more rarely that we saw houses freshly on fire.

"Several of us scouted among the private garages in search of motor cars and gasoline. But in this we were unsuccessful. The first great flight from the cities had swept all such utilities away. Galgan, a fine young man, was lost in this work. He was shot by prowlers while crossing a lawn. Yet this was our only casualty, though, once, a drunken brute deliberately opened fire on all of us. Luckily, he fired wildly, and we shot him before he had done any hurt.

"At Fruitvale, still in the heart of the magnificent resident section of the city, the plague again smote us. Professor Fair-

mead was the victim. Making signs to us that his mother was not to know, he turned aside into the grounds of a beautiful mansion. He sat down forlornly on the steps of the front veranda, and I, having lingered, waved him a last farewell.

"That night, several miles beyond Fruitvale and still in the city, we made camp. And that night we shifted camp twice to get away from our dead. In the morning there were thirty of us. I shall never forget the President of the Faculty. During the morning's march his wife, who was walking, betrayed the fatal symptoms, and when she drew aside to let us go on, he insisted on leaving the motor car and remaining with her. There was quite a discussion about this, but in the end we gave in. It was just as well, for we knew not which ones of us, if any, might ultimately escape.

"That night, the second of our march, we camped beyond Haywards in the first stretches of country. And in the morning there were eleven of us that lived. Also, during the night, Wathope, the professor with the wounded leg, deserted us in the motor car. He took with him his sister and his mother and most of our tinned provisions. It was that day, in the afternoon, while resting by the wayside, that I saw the last airship I shall ever see. The smoke was much thinner here in the country, and I first sighted the ship drifting and veering helplessly at an elevation of two thousand feet.

"What had happened I could not conjecture, but even as we looked we saw her bow dip down lower and lower. Then the bulkheads of the various gas-chambers must have burst, for, quite perpendicular, she fell like a plummet to the earth. And from that day to this I have not seen another airship. Often and often, during the next few years, I scanned the sky for them, hoping against hope that somewhere in the world civilization had survived. But it was not to be. What happened with us in California must have happened with everybody everywhere.

"Another day, and at Niles there were three of us. Beyond Niles, in the middle of the highway, we found Wathope. The motor car had broken down, and there, on the rugs which they had spread on the ground, lay the bodies of his sister, his mother, and himself.

"Wearied by the unusual exercise of continual walking, that night I slept heavily. In the morning I was alone in the world. Canfield and Parsons, my last companions, were dead of the plague. Of the four hundred that sought shelter in the Chemistry Building, and of the forty-seven that began the march, I alone remained—I and the Shetland pony. Why this should be so there is no explaining. I did not catch the plague, that is all. I was immune. I was merely the one lucky man in a million—just as every survivor was one in a million, or, rather, in several millions, for the proportion was at least that.

"FOR two days I sheltered in a pleasant grove where there had been no deaths. In those two days, while badly depressed and believing that my turn would come at any moment, nevertheless I rested and recuperated. So did the pony. And on the third day, putting what small store of tinned provisions I possessed on the pony's back, I started on across a very lonely land. Not a live man, woman, or child, did I encounter, though the dead were everywhere. Food, however, was abundant. The land then was not as it is now. It was all cleared of trees and brush, and it was cultivated. The food for millions of mouths was growing, ripening, and going to waste. From the fields and orchards I gathered vegetables, fruits, and berries. Around the deserted farmhouses I got eggs and caught chickens. And frequently I found supplies of tinned provisions in the store-rooms.

"A strange thing was what was taking place with all the domestic animals. Everywhere they were going wild and preying on one another. The chickens and ducks were the first to be destroyed, while the pigs were the first to go wild, followed by the cats. Nor were the dogs long in adapting themselves to the changed conditions. There was a veritable plague of dogs. They devoured the corpses, barked and howled during the nights, and in the daytime slunk about in the distance. As the time went by, I noticed a change in their behavior. At first they were apart from one another, very suspicious and very prone to fight. But after a not very long while they began to come together and run in packs.

"The dog, you see, always was a social animal, and this was true before ever he came to be domesticated by man. In the last days of the world before the plague, there were many many very different kinds of dogs—dogs without hair and dogs with warm fur, dogs so small that they would make scarcely a mouthful for other dogs that were as large as mountain lions. Well, all the small dogs, and weak types, were

killed by their fellows. Also, the very large ones were not adapted for the wild life and bred out. As a result, the many different kinds of dogs disappeared, and there remained, running in packs, the medium-sized wolfish dogs that you know to-day."

"But the cats don't run in packs, Granser," Hoo-Hoo objected.

"The cat was never a social animal. As one writer in the nineteenth century said, the cat walks by himself. He always walked by himself, from before the time he was tamed by man, down through the long ages of domestication, to to-day when once more he is wild.

"The horses also went wild, and all the fine breeds we had degenerated into the small mustang horse you know to-day. The cows likewise went wild, as did the pigeons and the sheep. And that a few of the chickens survived you know yourself. But the wild chicken of to-day is quite a different thing from the chickens we had in those days.

"But I must go on with my story. I traveled through a deserted land. As the time went by I began to yearn more and more for human beings. But I never found one, and I grew lonelier and lonelier.

"I crossed Livermore Valley and the mountains between it and the great valley of the San Joaquin. You have never seen that valley, but it is very large and it is the home of the wild horse. There are great droves there, thousands and tens of thousands. I revisited it thirty years after, so I know. You think there are lots of wild horses down here in the coast valleys, but they are as nothing compared with those of the San Joaquin. Strange to say, the cows, when they went wild, went back into the lower mountains. Evidently they were better able to protect themselves there.

"In the country districts the ghouls and prowlers had been less in evidence, for I found many villages and towns untouched by fire. But they were filled by the pestilential dead, and I passed by without exploring them. It was near Lathrop that, out of my loneliness, I picked up a pair of collie dogs that were so newly free that they were urgently willing to return to their allegiance to man. These collies accompanied me for many years, and the strains of them are in those very dogs there that you boys have today. But in sixty years the collie strain has worked out. These brutes are more like domesticated wolves than anything else."

Hare-Lip rose to his feet, glanced to see that the goats were safe, and looked at the sun's position in the afternoon sky, advertising impatience at the prolixity of the old man's tale. Urged to hurry by Edwin, Granser went on.

"There is little more to tell. With my two dogs and my pony, and riding a horse I had managed to capture, I crossed the San Joaquin and went on to a wonderful valley in the Sierras called Yosemite. In the great hotel there I found a prodigious supply of tinned provisions. The pasture was abundant, as was the game, and the river that ran through the valley was full of trout. I remained there three years in in an utter loneliness that none but a man who has once been highly civilized can understand. Then I could stand it no more. I felt that I was going crazy.

"Like the dog, I was a social animal and I needed my kind. I reasoned that since I had survived the plague, there was a possibility that others had survived. Also, I reasoned that after three years the plague germs must all be gone and the land be clean again.

"With my horse and dogs and pony, I set out. Again I crossed the San Joaquin Valley, the mountains beyond, and came down into Livermore Valley. The change in those three years was amazing. All the land had been splendidly tilled, and now I could scarcely recognize it, such was the sea of rank vegetation that had overrun the agricultural handiwork of man.

"You see, the wheat, the vegetables, and orchard trees had always been cared for and nursed by man, so that they were soft and tender. The weeds and wild bushes and such things, on the contrary, had always been fought by man, so that they were tough and resistant. As a result, when the hand of man was removed, the wild vegetation smothered and destroyed practically all the domesticated vegetation. The coyotes were greatly increased, and it was at this time that I first encountered wolves, straying in twos and threes and small packs down from the regions where they had always persisted.

"IT WAS at Lake Temescal, not far from the one-time city of Oakland, that I came upon the first live human beings. Oh, my grandsons, how can I describe to you my emotion, when, astride my horse and dropping down the hillside to the lake, I saw the smoke of a campfire rising through the trees? Almost did my heart stop beating. I felt that I was going crazy. Then I heard the cry of a babe—a human babe. And

dogs barked, and my dogs answered. I did not know but what I was the one human alive in the whole world. It could not be true that here were others—smoke, and the cry of a babe.

"Emerging on the lake, there, before my eyes, not a hundred yards away, I saw a man, a large man. He was standing on an outjutting rock and fishing. I was overcome. I stopped my horse. I tried to call out but could not. I waved my hand. It seemed to me that the man looked at me, but he did not appear to wave. I was afraid to look again, for I knew it was an hallucination, and I knew that if I looked the man would be gone. And so precious was the hallucination, that I wanted it to persist yet a little while. I knew, too, that as long as I did not look it would persist.

"Thus I remained, until I heard my dogs snarling, and a man's voice. What do you think the voice said? I will tell you. It said: *'Where in hell did you come from?'*

"Those were the exact words, the exact words. That was what your other grandfather said to me, Hare-Lip, when he greeted me there on the shore of Lake Temescal fifty-seven years ago. And they were the most ineffable words I have ever heard. I opened my eyes, and there he stood before me, a large, dark, hairy man, heavy-jawed, slant-browned, fierce-eyed. How I got off my horse I do not know. But it seemed that the next I knew I was clasping his hand with both of mine and crying. I would have embraced him, but he was ever a narrow-minded, suspicious man, and he drew away from be. Yet did I cling to him and cry."

Granser's voice faltered and broke at the recollection, and the weak tears streamed down his cheeks while the boys looked on and giggled.

"Yet did I cry," he continued, "and desire to embrace him, though the Chauffeur was a brute, a perfect brute—the most abhorrent man I have ever known. His name was strange, how I have forgotten his name. Everybody called him Chauffeur—it was the name of his occupation, and it stuck. That is how, to this day, the tribe he founded is called the Chauffeur Tribe.

"He was a violent, unjust man. Why the plague germs spared him I can never understand. It would seem, in spite of our old metaphysical notions about absolute justice, that there is no justice in the universe. Why did he live?—an iniquitous, moral monster, a blot on the face of nature, a cruel, relentless, bestial cheat as well. All he could talk about was motor cars, machinery, gasoline, and garages—and especially, and with huge delight, of his mean pilferings and sordid swindlings of the persons who had employed him in the days before the coming of the plague. And yet he was spared, while hundreds of millions, yea, billions, of better men were destroyed.

"I went on with him to his camp, and there I saw her, Vesta, the one woman. It was glorious, and . . pitiful. There she was, Vesta Van Warden, the young wife of John Van Warden, clad in rags, with marred and scarred and toil-calloused hands, bending over the campfire and doing scullion work—she, Vesta, who had been born to the purple of the greatest baronage of wealth the world has ever known. John Van Warden, her husband, worth one billion, eight hundred millions and President of the Board of Industrial Magnates, had been the ruler of America. Also, sitting on the International Board of Control, he had been one of the seven men who ruled the world. And she herself had come of equally noble stock.

"Her father, Philip Saxon, had been President of the Board of Industrial Magnates up to the time of his death. This office was in process of becoming hereditary, and had Philip Saxon had a son that son would have succeeded him. But his only child was Vesta, the perfect flower of generations of the highest culture this planet has ever produced.

"It was not until the engagement between Vesta and Van Warden took place, that Saxon indicated the latter as his successor. It was, I am sure, a political marriage. I have reason to believe that Vesta never really loved her husband in the mad passionate way of which the poets used to sing. It was more like the marriages that obtained among crowned heads in the days before they were displaced by the Magnates.

"And there she was, boiling fish-chowder in a soot-covered pot, her glorious eyes inflamed by the acrid smoke of the open fire. Hers was a sad story. She was the one survivor in a million, as I had been, as the Chauffeur had been. On a crowning eminence of the Alameda Hills, overlooking San Francisco Bay, Van Warden had built a vast summer palace. It was surrounded by a park of a thousand acres. When the plague broke out, Van Warden sent her there. Armed guards patrolled the boundaries of the park, and nothing entered in the way of provisions or even mail mat-

ter that was not first fumigated. And yet did the plague enter, killing the guards at their posts, the servants at their tasks, sweeping away the whole army of retainers—or, at least, all of them who did not flee to die elsewhere. So it was that Vesta found herself the sole living person in the palace that had become a charnel house.

"NOW the Chauffeur had been one of the servants that ran away. Returning, two months afterward, he discovered Vesta in a little summer pavilion where there had been no deaths and where she had established herself. He was a brute. She was afraid, and she ran away and hid among the trees. That night, on foot, she fled into the mountains—she, whose tender feet and delicate body had never known the bruise of stones nor the scratch of briars.

"He followed, and that night he caught her. He struck her. Do you understand? He beat her with those terrible fists of his and made her his slave. It was she who had to gather the firewood, build the fires, cook, and do all the degrading camp-labor—she, who had never performed a menial act in her life. These things he compelled her to do, while he, a proper savage, elected to lie around camp and look on. He did nothing, absolutely nothing, except on ocasion to hunt meat or catch fish."

"Good for Chauffeur," Hare-Lip commented in an undertone to the other boys. "I remember him before he died. He was a corker. But he did things, and he made things go. You know, Dad married his daughter, an' you ought to see the way he knocked the spots outa Dad. The Chauffeur was a son-of-a-gun. He made us kids stand around. Even when he was croakin', he reached out for me, once, an' laid my head open with that long stick he kept always beside him."

Hare-Lip rubbed his bullet head reminiscently, and the boys returned to the old man, who was maundering ecstatically about Vesta, the squaw of the founder of the Chauffeur Tribe.

"And so I say to you that you cannot understand the awfulness of the situation. The Chauffeur was a servant, understand, a servant. And he cringed, with bowed head, to such as she. She was a lord of life, both by birth and by marriage. The destinies of millions, such as he, she carried in the hollow of her pink-white hand. And, in the days before the plague, the slightest contact with such as he would have been pollution. Oh, I have seen it. Once, I remember, there was Mrs. Goldwin, wife of one of the great magnates. It was on a landing stage, just as she was embarking in her private dirigible, that she dropped her parasol. A servant picked it up and made the mistake of handing it to her—to her, one of the greatest royal ladies of the land! She shrank back, as though he were a leper, and indicated her secretary to receive it. Also, she ordered her secretary to ascertain the creature's name and to see that he was immediately discharged from service. And such a woman was Vesta Van Warden. And her the Chauffeur beat and made his slave.

"—Bill—that was it; Bill, the Chauffeur. That was his name. He was a wretched, primitive man, wholly devoid of the finer instincts and chivalrous promptings of a cultured soul. No, there is no absolute justice, for to him fell that wonder of womanhood, Vesta Van Warden. The grievousness of this you will never understand, my grandsons; for you are yourselves primitive little savages, unaware of aught else but savagery. Why should Vesta not have been mine? I was a man of culture and refinement, a professor in a great university. Even so, in the time before the plague, such was her exalted position, she would not have deigned to know that I existed.

"Mark, then, the abysmal degradation to which she fell at the hands of the Chauffeur. Nothing less than the destruction of all mankind had made it possible that I should know her, look in her eyes, converse with her, touch her hand—ay, and love her and know that her feelings toward me were very kindly. I have reason to believe that she, even she, would have loved me, there being no man in the world except the chauffeur. Why, when it destroyed eight billions of souls, did not the plague destroy just one more man, and that man the Chauffeur?

"Once, when the Chauffeur was away fishing, she begged me to kill him. With tears in her eyes she begged me to kill him. But he was a strong and violent man, and I was afraid. Afterwards, I talked with him. I offered him my horse, my pony, my dogs, all that I possessed, if he would give Vesta to me. And he grinned in my face and shook his head. He was very insulting.

"He said that in the old days he had been a servant, had been dirt under the feet of men like me and of women like Vesta, and that now he had the greatest lady in the land to be servant to him and cook his

food and nurse his brats. 'You had your day before the plague,' he said, 'but this is my day, and a damned good day it is. I wouldn't trade back to the old times for anything.' Such words he spoke, but they are not his words. He was a vulgar, low-minded man, and vile oaths fell continually from his lips.

"Also, he told me that if he caught me making eyes at his wife, he'd wring my neck and give her a beating as well. What was I to do? I was afraid. He was a brute. That first night, when I discovered the camp, Vesta and I had great talk about the things of our vanished world. We talked of art, and books, and poetry; and the Chauffeur listened and grinned and sneered. He was bored and angered by our way of speech which he did not comprehend, and finally he spoke up and said: 'And this is Vesta Van Warden, one time wife of Van Warden the Magnate—a high and stuck-up beaty, who is now my squaw. Eh, Professor Smith, times is changed. Here, you, woman, take off my moccasins, and lively about it. I want Professor Smith to see how well I have you trained.'

"I saw her clench her teeth, and the flame of revolt rise in her face. He drew back his gnarled fist to strike, and I was afraid, and sick at heart. I could no nothing to prevail against him. So I got up to go, and not be witness to such indignity. But the Chauffeur laughed and threatened me with a beating if I did not stay and behold. And I sat there, perforce, by the campfire on the shore of Lake Temescal, and saw Vesta, Vesta Van Warden, kneel and remove the moccasins of that grinning, hairy, ape-like human brute.

"—Oh, you do not understand, my grandsons. You have never known anything else, and you do not understand.

"'Halter-broke and bridle-wise,' the Chauffeur gloated, while she performed that dreadful menial task. 'A trifle balky at times, Professor, a trifle balky; but a clout alongside the jaw makes her as meek and gentle as a lamb.'

"And another time he said: 'We've got to start all over and replenish the earth and multiply. You're handicapped, Professor. You ain't got no wife, and we're up against a regular Garden-of-Eden proposition. But I ain't proud. I'll tell you what, Professor.' He pointed at their little infant, barely a year old. 'There's your wife, though you'll have to wait till she grows up. It's rich, ain't it? We're all equals here, and I'm the biggest toad in the splash. But I ain't stuck up—not I. I do you the honor, Professor Smith, the very great honor of betrothing to you my and Vesta Van Warden's daughter. Ain't it cussed bad that Van Warden ain't here to see?'"

CHAPTER IV

"I LIVED three weeks of infinite torment there in the Chauffeur's camp. And then, one day, tiring of me, or of what to him was my bad effect on Vesta, he told me that the year before, wandering through the Contra Costa Hills to the Straits of Carquinez, across the Straits he had seen a smoke. This meant that there were still other human beings, and that for three weeks he had kept this inestimably precious information from me. I departed at once, with my dogs and horses, and journeyed across the Contra Hills to the Straits. I saw no smoke on the other side, but at Port Costa discovered a small steel barge on which I was able to embark my animals.

"Old canvas which I found served me for a sail, and a southerly breeze fanned me across the Straits and up to the ruins of Vallejo. Here, on the outskirts of the city, I found evidences of a recently occupied camp. Many clamshells showed me why these humans had come to the shores of the Bay. This was the Santa Rosa Tribe, and I followed its track along the old railroad right of way across the salt marshes to Sonoma Valley. Here, at the old brickyard at Glen Ellen, I came upon the camp. There were eighteen souls all told. Two were old men, one of whom was Jones, a banker. The other was Harrison, a retired pawnbroker, who had taken for wife the matron of the State Hospital for the Insane at Napa. Of all the persons of the city of Napa, and of all the other towns and villages in that rich and populous valley, she had been the only survivor. Next, there were the three young men—Cardiff and Hale, who had been farmers, and Wainwright, a common day-laborer.

"All three had found wives. To Hale, a crude, illiterate farmer, had fallen Isadora, the greatest prize, next to Vesta, of the women who came through the plague. She was one of the world's most noted singers, and the plague had caught her at San Francisco. She has talked with me for hours at a time, telling me of her adventures, until at last, rescued by Hale in the Mendocino Forest Reserve, there had remained nothing for her to do but become his wife. But Hale was a good fellow, in

spite of his illiteracy. He had a keen sense of justice and right-dealing, and she was far happier with him than was Vesta with the Chauffeur.

"The wives of Cardiff and Wainwright were ordinary women, accustomed to toil, with strong constitutions—just the type for the wild new life which they were compelled to live. In addition were two adult idiots from the feeble-minded home at Eldredge, and five or six young children and infants born after the formation of the Santa Rosa Tribe. Also, there was Bertha.

"She was a good woman, Hare-Lip, in spite of the sneers of your father. Her I took for wife. She was the mother of your father, Edwin, and of yours, Hoo-Hoo. And it was our daughter, Vera, who married your father, Hare-Lip—your father, Sandow, who was the oldest son of Vesta Van Warden and the Chauffeur.

"And so it was that I became the nineteenth member of the Santa Rosa Tribe. There were only two outsiders added after me. One was Mungerson, descended from the Magnates, who wandered alone in the wilds of Northern California for eight years before he came south and joined us. He it was who waited twelve years more before he married my daughter, Mary. The other was Johnson, the man who founded the Utah Tribe. That was where he came from, Utah, a country that lies very far away from here, across the great deserts, to the east.

"It was not until twenty-seven years after the plague that Johnson reached California. In all that Utah region he reported but three survivors, himself one, and all men. For many years these three men lived and hunted together, until, at last, desperate, fearing that with them the human race would perish utterly from the planet, they headed westward on the possibility of finding women survivors in California.

"Johnson alone came through the great desert, where his two companions died. He was forty-six years old when he joined us, and he married the fourth daughter of Isadore and Hale, and his eldest son married your aunt, Hare-Lip, who was the third daughter of Vesta and the Chauffeur. Johnson was a strong man, with a will of his own. And it was because of this that he seceded from the Santa Rosans and formed the Utah Tribe at San José.

"It is a small tribe—there are only nine in it; but, though he is dead, such was his influence and the strength of his breed, that it will grow into a strong tribe and play a leading part in the recivilization of the planet.

"THERE are only two other tribes that we know of—the Los Angelitos and the Carmelitos. The latter started from one man and woman. He was called Lopez, and he was descended from the ancient Mexicans and was very black. He was a cow-herd in the ranges beyond Carmel, and his wife was a maid-servant in the great Del Monte Hotel. It was seven years before we first got in touch with the Los Angelitos. They have a good country down there, but it is too warm. I estimate the present population of the world at between three hundred and fifty and four hundred—provided, of course, that there are no scattered little tribes elsewhere in the world. If there be such, we have not heard from them.

"Since Johnson crossed the desert from Utah, no word nor sign has come from the East or anywhere else. The great world which I knew in my boyhood and early manhood is gone. It has ceased to be. I am the last man who was alive in the days of the plague and who knows the wonders of that far-off time. We, who mastered the planet—its earth, and sea, and sky—and who were as very gods, now live in primitive savagery along the water courses of this California country.

"But we are increasing rapidly—your sister, Hare-Lip, already has four children. We are increasing rapidly and making ready for a new climb toward civilization. In time, pressure of population will compel us to spread out, and a hundred generations from now we may expect our descendants to start across the Sierras, oozing slowly along, generation by generation, over the great continent to the colonization of the East—a new Aryan drift around the world.

"But it will be slow, very slow; we have so far to climb. We fell so hopelessly far. If only one physicist or one chemist had survived! But it was not to be, and we have forgotten everything. The Chauffeur started working in iron. He made the forge which we use to this day. But he was a lazy man, and when he died he took with him all that he knew of metals and machinery.

"What was I to know of such things? I was a classical scholar, not a chemist. The other men who survived were not educated. Only two things did the Chauffeur accomplish—the brewing of strong drink and the growing of tobacco. It was while

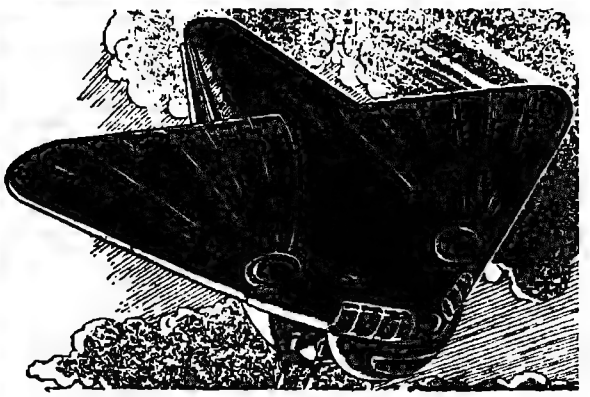
he was drunk, once, that he killed Vesta. I firmly believe that he killed Vesta in a fit of drunken cruelty though he always maintained that she fell into the lake and was drowned.

"And, my grandsons, let me warn you against the medicine-men. They call themselves *doctors,* travestying what was once a noble profession, but in reality they are medicine-men, and they make for superstition and darkness. They are cheats and liars. But so debased and degraded are we, that we believe their lies. They, too, will increase in numbers as we increase, and they will strive to rule us. Yet are they liars and charlatans. Look at young Cross-Eyes, posing as a doctor, selling charms against sickness, giving good hunting, exchanging promises of fair weather for good meat and skins, sending the death-stick, performing a thousand abominations. Yet I say, to you, that when he says he can do all these things, he lies.

"I, Professor Smith, Professor James Howard Smith, say that he lies. I have told him so to his teeth. Why has he not sent me the death-stick? Because he knows that with me it is without avail. But you, Hare-Lip, so deeply are you sunk in black superstition that did you awake this night and find the death-stick beside you, you would surely die. And you would die, not because of any virtues in the stick, but because you are a savage with the dark and clouded mind of a savage.

"The doctors must be destroyed, and all that was lost must be discovered over again. Wherefore, earnestly, I repeat unto you certain things which you must remember and tell to your children after you. You must tell them that when water is made hot by fire, there resides in it a wonderful thing called steam, which is stronger than ten thousand men and which can do all man's work for him. There are other very useful things. In the lightning flash resides a similarly strong servant of man, which was of old his slave and which some day will be his slave again.

"Quite a different thing is the alphabet. It is what enables me to know the meaning of fine markings, whereas you boys know only rude picture-writing. In that dry cave on Telegraph Hill, where you see me often go when the tribe is down by the sea, I have stored many books. In them is great wisdom. Also, with them, I have



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placed a key to the alphabet, so that one who knows picture-writing may also know print. Some day men will read again; and then, if no accident has befallen my cave they will know that Professor James Howard Smith once lived and saved for them the knowledge of the ancients.

"THERE is another little device that men inevitably will rediscover. It is called gunpowder. It was what enabled us to kill surely and at long distances. Certain things which are found in the ground, when combined in the right proportions, will make this gunpowder. What these things are, I have forgotten, or else I never knew. But I wish I did know. Then would I make powder, and then would I certainly kill Cross-Eyes and rid the land of superstition—"

"After I am man-grown I am going to give Cross-Eyes all the goats, and meat, and skins I can get, so that he'll teach me to be a doctor," Hoo-Hoo asserted. "And when I know, I'll make everybody else sit up and take notice. They'll get down in the dirt for me, you bet."

The old man nodded his head solemnly, and murmured:

"Strange it is to hear the vestiges and remnants of the complicated Aryan speech falling from the lips of a filthy little skin-clad savage. All the world is topsy-turvy, ever since the plague."

"You won't make me sit up," Hare-Lip boasted to the would-be medicine-man. "If I paid you for a sending of the death-stick and it didn't work, I'd bust in your head—understand, you Hoo-Hoo, you?"

"I'm going to get Granser to remember this here gunpowder stuff," Edwin said softly, "and then I'll have you all on the run. You, Hare-Lip, will do my fighting for me and get my meat for me, and you, Hoo-Hoo, will send the death-stick for me and make everybody afraid. And if I catch Hare-Lip trying to bust your head, Hoo-Hoo, I'll fix him with that same gunpowder. Granser ain't such a fool as you think, and I'm going to listen to him and some day I'll be boss, ruling over the whole bunch of you."

The old man shook his head sadly, and said:

"The gunpowder will come. Nothing can stop it—the same old story over and over. Man will increase, and men will fight. The gunpowder will enable men to kill millions of men, and in this way only, by fire and blood, will a new civilization, in some remote day, be evolved. And of what profit will it be? Just as the old civilization passed, so will the new. It may take fifty thousand years to build, but nevertheless it will pass.

"All things pass. Only remain cosmic force and matter, ever in flux, ever acting and reacting and realizing the eternal types—the priest, the soldier, and the king. Out of the mouths of babes comes the wisdom of all the ages. Some will fight, some will rule, some will pray; and all the rest will toil and suffer sore while on their bleeding carcasses is reared again and yet again, without end, the amazing beauty and surpassing wonder of the civilized state.

"It were just as well that I destroyed those cave-stored books—whether they remain or perish, all their old truths will be discovered, their old lies lived and handed down. What is the profit—"

Hare-Lip leaped to his feet, giving a quick glance at the pasturing goats and the afternoon sun.

"Gee!" he muttered to Edwin. "The old geezer gets more long-winded every day. Let's pull for camp."

While the other two, aided by the dogs, assembled the goats and started them for the trail through the forest, Edwin stayed by the old man and guided him in the same direction. When they reached the old right of way, Edwin stopped suddenly and looked back.

Hare-Lip and Hoo-Hoo and the dogs and the goats passed on. Edwin was looking at a small herd of wild horses which had come down on the hard sand. There were at least twenty of them, young colts and yearlings and mares, led by a beautiful stallion which stood in the foam at the edge of the surf, with arched neck and bright wild eyes, sniffing the salt air from off the sea.

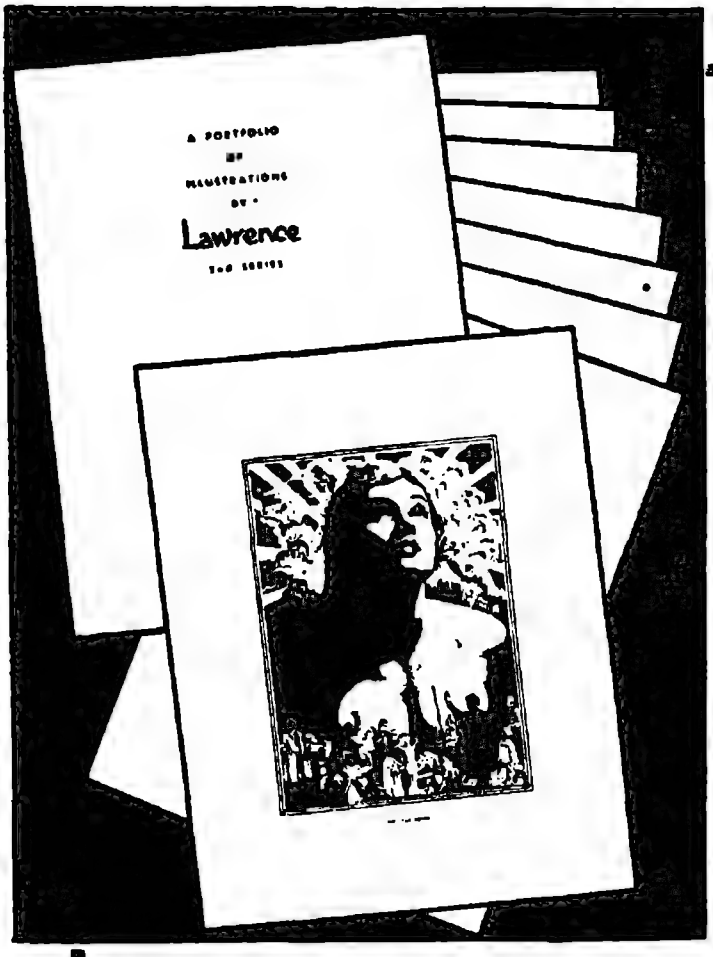
"What is it?" Granser queried.

"Horses," was the answer. "First time I ever seen 'em on the beach. It's the mountain lions getting thicker and thicker and driving 'em down."

The low sun shot red shafts of light, fan shaped, up from a cloud-tumbled horizon. And close at hand, in the white waste of shore-lashed waters, the sea-lions, bellowing their old primeval chant, hauled up out of the sea on the black rocks and fought and courted.

"Come on, Granser," Edwin prompted.

And old man and boy, skin-clad and barbaric, turned and went along the right of way into the forest in the wake of the goats.



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F. F. M. February

(Continued from page 8)

many others, and that is: Both *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* and *Fantastic Novels* should go monthly!

DARRELL C. RICHARDSON.

6 Silver Ave.,
Covington, Ky.

CALLING YOUNG READERS!

"The Lion's Way" is one of the best novels to appear in *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*. However, there is rarely a poor story in F.F.M. or your sister mag, *Fantastic Novels*.

I like F.F.M. and F.N. for four reasons especially. They are:

1. Great stories by great authors.
2. Good pictures and lots of them.
3. The best reader's column in *any* mag.
4. And your system of allowing other mags to be mentioned in the letters you publish.

I have two other reasons for writing this letter. One is to find out if there is a teen-age reader of fantasy in Petersburg. If there is, how about giving me a ring at 2164-W? The other reason is to start a correspondence with other teen-age readers of science-fiction.

In closing, I want to wish F.F.M. and F.N. the best of luck in the future.

HAL GRUTCHFIELD.

1830 Berkeley Ave.,
Petersburg, Va.

STONEHAM FINE

This is my first letter to your mag, but I hope it won't be my last. I have just finished the October issue of F.F.M. I have been reading Science Fiction for about 9 years and in this issue I have found one of the few great stories. "The Lion's Way," by Stoneham was in my estimation one of the finest tales ever printed.

I couldn't even put the mag down to take time out for dinner, so I went without; yet I feel that it was worth the loss. I hope you will have more of Stoneham with the same type of stories in your future issues.

The illustrations were excellent and the story was so complete in every detail that it was indeed a pleasure to read it after struggling through the fantasy of the shorts of the same issue. It brought back reminiscences of that old master, Edgar Rice Burroughs. Thanks for the brief article on same.

I'm a Cpl. in the Army and have just returned to the States. I am having lots of fun gaining lost time browsing through the second-hand mag stores. I have a few mags missing from last year's issues but I shall no doubt find them soon. Thanks again for the swell yarn by Stoneham.

STEVE BURLESON.

Box 152,
Port Orchard, Washington.

"THE WOMEN"—GOOD BRADBURY

There has been a marked increase in quality in the last three issues of F.F.M. and the latest held its own with the previous two.

"The Lion's Way" was a very good adventure story and I enjoyed it quite a lot. Unusual it is but not fantasy. However, since you've given us this story, please print the sequel within the next six issues, will you? Although a good story, it was no bell-ringer and can't in any way compare to the days of "Ark of Fire", "The Iron Star" and the lush period of F.F.M. in 1944. Still, this was better than some we've had previously, and I'm not kicking.

Bradbury's "The Women" is typically good Bradbury. That's almost all I can say. It isn't as good as "King of the Grey Spaces" though. It did have me wondering whether the man would make it home or not. But knowing Bradbury, I should've known the sea would get him!

Many vampire yarns have been spun, almost to the extent of a reader skipping over a story thought to be a vampire story. But in this story, I got some enjoyment. It was well written and almost overtook Bradbury's story. I knew that the little girl in blue jeans was the vampire the minute the man spotted her! But I still liked the story. Enjoyed it, I mean. I see that I'm given to repeating myself about these!

"That Low" didn't ring the bell for me. Just missed fire but the other yarns certainly made up for it all right.

The cover was very good and a credit to Lawrence. Symbolic as almost always, I notice. Thanks for not putting any more lettering on it than necessary. However, the sub-title on the cover, "A novel of dark trails" is almost laughable!

As usual, Masters of Fantasy was most welcome. I need not worry about this section dropping in quality either.

The letter column, as usual, is top rate in all ways . . . but one. And that is the one Kenny Pitchford brought up. I hope you can make some comment here and there, especially where questions are asked that you can easily answer. And yet a more important thing comes to mind. The lack of an Editor's Page. There is something missing from the magazine that doesn't have the Editor's Page. The mag doesn't seem complete. I know that many things could be discussed easier and questions cleared up, for just two examples, if you had your Page. Surely the Company won't suffer terribly if a half-column of ads are cut and I doubt very much if the readers would object if you took a half-column to make up the page, from the letter section. How about it, fellow readers? Let's get our Editor to have an Editor's Page!!

Looking to the future: How about Chambers' "Slayer of Souls", some more Dunsany and something more by Hodgson? And don't forget "The Fox Woman"! Thumbs down on most of Stapledon's works. Either too easy to get in book form or too long and tedious for F.F.M.

Well, soon the new F.N. will be out. You'll hear from me once more then, and again and again!

ED COX.

4 Spring St.,
Lubec, Maine.

CONCERNING KASPAR

Since, although I haven't many—just five—of his novels, E. R. Burroughs is my favorite writer, and his immortal "Tarzan" cannot be imitated (though I must admit "The Lion's Way" is a pretty good job—whether intentional or not), I was very pleased to see it. It was even better than I had anticipated (and, believe me, I can anticipate all right).

Many readers will no doubt expostulate to some extent upon the foregone (to them) conclusion that TLW is pure adventure and not suited to these hallowed pages.

But that is purely a matter of personal beliefs—if a person says that type isn't fantasy, then it isn't—as far as he is concerned. Then he will team up with others who hold similar tenets, and they will be safe in a little world of their own making.

The rest—Bradbury, Tenn, and Sturgeon. Bradbury? Wunnerful! Nuff said!!

Anyone who knows, please write and tell me what Burroughs has written—especially Tarzan, book or mag. And where I can get it for cheapest possible price (not that I'm a tightwad, but.)

W. PAUL GANLEY.

119 Ward Road,
North Tonawanda, N. Y.

LIKED CLYNE PIC

This little gem (germ?) marks my first letter to any magazine, fantasy or otherwise, (slight pause while editor selects sharp axe) and naturally I don't expect to see it in print. Nevertheless, I must congratulate you on your October issue. The cover was pretty fair—not too splashy. The lead story was (as no doubt other brilliant fans will deduce) a chunk of Tarzan (only with lions instead of apes) but well done and pretty darn good. Finlay was at his best (he usually is) and the shorts (especially "The Human Angle") were unusually good. More of Clyne. Please!! The Readers' Viewpoint is still the best letter section in the F. & S. F. magazines. Although ye Ed. remains more or less the strong silent type, nevertheless T.R.V. remains entertaining and helpful as well.

I guess that's all, dear Ed. except for a plea for more Haggard, Taine, and Merritt. (How about H. P. Lovecraft? He must have written other novels besides "Shadow Out of Time". I'd love to see Finlay tackle "Cthulhu" or "The Lurker at the Threshold").

Does anybody care to write to me for the purpose of discussing Fantasy, Science Fiction, Supernatural Fiction, or other weird stuff? How 'bout it, folks? I'm lonely!

Yours until Ys freezes over,
BILL CALABRESE.

52 Pacific St.,
Stamford, Conn.

THE PERFECT MAGAZINE

I have been reading science-fiction for a decade, but have usually shunned the stories of pure fantasy. That was, until I happened to read the February 1947 issue of F.F.M., and Jack London's magnificent story, "The Star Rover." I cannot remember any story making such a profound impression upon me. Would be a classic in any form of literature, not merely fantasy. Since then, I have been an ardent admirer of F.F.M., and frankly I find it difficult to suggest anything in the way of an improvement; you seem to have that rarity, a perfect magazine. Possibly the only thing you could do to make F.F.M. better than it is, would be to give us trimmed edges. I agree with one of your readers who recently said that the contents are the most important part of any magazine, but trimmed edges would be an asset.

In Finlay and Lawrence you have the two best artists it is possible to get, in fact I would go further than those readers who believe that they are the two best illustrators of pulp magazines. I believe they are two of the most important contemporary artists in any sphere. Maybe in saying that I am revealing my ignorance of art or somethin', but faced with a battery of experts I would still stick to my opinion.

I would like to see for future reprints, "Dracula" by Bram Stoker and "Frankenstein" by Mary Shelley.

I will always be glad to hear from fantasy and science-fiction enthusiasts in any country.

Fantastically yours,
ROGER N. DARD.

232 James St.,
Perth, Western Australia.

LAWRENCE COVER EXCELLENT

Inclosed is $1.75 for a subscription to *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* and one Lawrence portfolio.

I'm very glad to see the republication of the Lawrence and Finlay 'folios. I'd like to ask if anybody has for sale the Finlay Portfolios No. 1 and No. 2, and the No. 1 'folio of Lawrene's.

I would like very much to see a portfolio come out once a year of Finlay's and Lawrence's illustrations. The pictures would be preferable from the preceding year, from both F.N. and F.F.M., and would be picked by the readers; eight illustrations of each artist that receives the most votes. Each reader having two votes each month, alternating with F.F.M. and F.N. In both folios I'd like to see color pictures taken from the cover with the removal of the lettering.

To start the ball rolling, I'll cast my two votes to Finlay—page 83, Lawrence—cover.

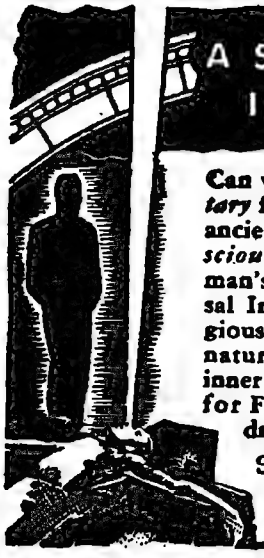
"The Lion's Way" was very excellent. I thoroughly enjoyed it and hope to see many more stories on the Jungle theme.

CHARLES HENDERSON.

2146 Est 13th South,
Salt Lake City 5, Utah.

RIDER HAGGARD FOLLOWER

This is my first letter to any stf magazine and I hope that it gets published. I was given several back issues of F.F.M. and thus became acquainted with the magazine; though I have only been an stf fan for five years (being 18),



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FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES

I think that F.F.M. is the best on the market.

Being an amateur pen-an-ink artist of sorts, I have an extra respect for Finlay's fine work. This is an added cause to save your mag.

I got my first copy of *Fantastic Novels* with the September issue. I hope there will be many more, and that each will be better than its predecessor.

My favourite author in the mags that I own is Rider Haggard. I hope to see many more of his stories in following issues of F.F.M. I possess no fantasy books of any kind and hope to build up a library for the future by having my F.F.M. bound.

Other than praise for F.F.M. and F.N., the main purpose for writing is to find out if any kind reader has back issues of stf mags. Of course, F.F.M. is first on the list, followed by anything else. Perhaps there are some books by Rider Haggard around; any of these would would be greatly appreciated. H. P. Lovecraft is under the same listing. Anyone wishing to write a young stf fan in Canada, write anyway, and I hope to be able to answer immediately.

HENRY SPEER.

270 McGregor Ave.,
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada.

REBUKING US

If, as I suspect, you get a mass of letters to the effect that "The Lion's Way" in the October F.F.M. was just a rehash of the Tarzan theme, don't let it faze you. I am sure that there are many of us addicts who appreciate a good yarn even if the theme has a couple of whiskers. The story is in the writing, not the plot or theme. If an old theme is well done, then we have absolutely no kick coming. And Stoneham did a good job.

Lawrence did a good job on the cover, as usual. And, also as usual, Finlay was excellent.

I gree with Kenny Pitchford. The Editor *should* reply to comments and queries in the letters. And I think we all want more than just a "best wishes to you, Kenny." After all, we spend the time to write letters to you, not necessarily expecting them to be printed, and when they are, we would like a little more than the printers' ink. The comment after Mr. Falco's letter is more like it.

As to what to print, I would welcome more of Haggard. Wells, Burroughs (Pellucidar and Barsoom tales), Taine, and myriads of others that all the addicts write in about.

And thanks for printing my last letter. I have already had several notes from people in response to my request and just friendly "Hi there, fellow fantasy addict" notes. It is good to know that the readers are so friendly.

MICHAEL J. KEENAN.

116 S. Atrisco Rd.,
Albuquerque, N. Mex.

"THAT LOW" BEST SHORT

Hi-ya! Here's Rhoden—again!!! This time I'm going to cover three issues of F.F.M. in one letter.

Last ish, "The Lion's Way" was an excellent story, but I can't see where the fantasy comes in. It reminded me very much of the ERB "Tarzan" series, especially "Tarzan of the Apes" in which I can't find much fantasy; that is, no more fantasy than is in any novel. The shorts were just about perfect too. I liked "That Low," best of the three, however. Ray Bradbury, as usual, was good.

In the August issue, "The Purple Sapphire" was one of the best stories which you have published in the last three years. It, at least, was a genuine fantasy. The short could have been better.

Another which I liked a lot was "The Devil's Spoon". My only kick being: did Haroot ever get back to heaven? As to shorts, "The Shadow and the Flash" was pretty good, even though I preferred "Eemanu Grows Up"

I started to read "Conquest of the Moon Pool" in F.N., but didn't have time to finish . . however, it starts out like another hack job. At times, A. Merritt was damn good, at other times he stank! In general, I haven't liked F.N. as well as F.F.M.

In the October F.F.M., on page 124, there is a notice on *Railroad Magazine*. R.R. Mag. just happens to be the *best* mag published by Popular Publications (you might show this statement to Editor Hank Comstock; he would appreciate it. I've been reading R.R. Mag. for about ten years).

The October *Railroad Magazine* is (was) published on slick paper, and I am wondering when you are going to make a slick out of F.F.M. and F.N.

Well, guess I won't recommend any stories for you; I'll just recommend some authors: August Derleth; A. E. Coppard; Lord Dunsany; A. E. Van Vogt; H. G. Wells; couple dozen others.

Guess I'll end here, with the following: If any stf or fantasy fans want to write to me, I'll answer all the letters that I have time for, and will acknowledge the others by post card; it is really a matter of first come first served.

JOSEPH R. RHODEN, JR.

1244 N. Dearborn St.,
Chicago 10, Ill.

GENERAL RATING FOR F.F.M.

Congratulations. Since my last letter, which was full of bad cracks about your magazine, you've come through with a tale that leaves me purring like a kitten. I'm speaking of "The Lion's Way" of course. The issue before that, containing "The Purple Sapphire," was even better.

Your illustrations are improving too. Maybe somebody gave Finlay and Lawrence a shot of revivo juice. Believe me, they needed it.

In looking over back issues recently I decided to list what I thought were F.F.M.'s best stories and which were its poorest. Here it is: Best! 1. "The Star Rover" 2. "The Devil's Spoon" 3. "Minimun Man". 4. "The Willows". 5. "The Wendigo" 6. "Island of Dr. Moreau".

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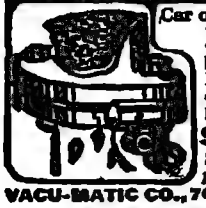

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7. "Day of the Brown Horde". 8. "Allan and the Ice-Gods". 9. "Place of Monsters". 10. "Blind Spot". 11. "The Greatest Adventure". 12. "The Man Who Was Thursday". 13. "Derelict". 14. "Before I Wake".

To list the worst would take up another good-sized letter. Here's a few choice samples: 1. "On the Brink of 2000". 2. "The Planet Juggler". 3. "Unthinkable". 4. "Twenty-Fifth Hour". 5. "The Machine Stops". 6. "Even a Worm". 7. "Eamanu Grows Up". 8. "Prisoner In Time". 9. "Night Before the End of the World". 10. "Man Who Went Back". 11. "Angry Street."

In my own personal opinion the best "atmospheric" fantasies ever written are "The Willows" and "The Wendigo". Blackwood can't be beat for creating horror in the great outdoors.

I read recently that A. Conan Doyle's great adventure fantasy "The Lost World" is to be made into a technicolor movie. I recall it was filmed once before, back in the late twenties with Wally Beery and Lewis Stone. It's too bad more studios can't get interested in good fantasy.

I'd like to see "The Dunwich Horror", "The Willows", and "The Star Rover" filmed. In the past few years the number of good fantasy pictures released can be counted on one hand. They are "Lost Horizon", "Along Comes Mr. Jordan", "Beast With Five Fingers", "Dreams That Money Can Buy", "Devil and Daniel Webster", "Shadows", "Dr. Cyclops", "Body Snatcher", "I Walked With A Zombie", "Angel on My Shoulder", and a few recent feeble attempts—"Mr. Peabody and the Mermaid" and "Heaven Only Knows".

But enough of that. Regardless of any brickbats I hurl at you, there's no denying yours is the best magazine of its kind published.

A loyal fantasite,
ROY (BLACKBEARD) HALE.

FROM A BURROUGHS AUTHORITY

This is too good—new portfolios by Lawrence and Finlay. Enclosed find my dollar and a half for a set of each.

Glad you finally got around to honoring *the* master of fantasy in your Masters of Fantasy feature. Meaning Edgar Rice Burroughs of course. Was a bit disappointed in Neil Austin's pictorial, tho—the poorest he has done to date. His other work for the same feature has been fine.

Mr. Snevets is mistaken about "The Red Star of Tarzan" not being published in book form. It was published as a book in 1938 under the title "Tarzan and the Forbidden City". I'd like very much to see some of Burroughs' work in F.F.M. or F.N.

For Mr. Herzog's information, "Morgo the Mighty" was a Tarzan-type character that lived in a cave world with giant ants and bat-people. The story was written by Sean O'Larkin and started in the first September issue, 1930, of *Popular*.

VERNELL CORIELL.

Box 78,
Manito, Ill.

THE READERS' VIEWPOINT

A BURROUGHS MAN

Congratulations! I have been reading F.F.M. for two years now, but I have never read anything to equal "The Lion's Way". The story is right! If Stoneham has ever written anything at all in this field, by all means print it. It is the best story of its kind I have read since "Tarzan of the Apes".

Which reminds me; I am wild about Burroughs and have spent six years collecting Tarzan books and now have twenty-two. Until today I believed I had all of them ever written, but in looking through the readers' column I saw a letter asking for "The Red Star of Tarzan".

I was dazed, shocked beyond words—a Tarzan story unpublished in book form! I am absolutely helpless as far as getting it is concerned.

Please, please, whatever you do, print it and any other unpublished Tarzan story.

CHARLES MILLER.

5745 Lansdowne,
St. Louis, Mo.

Editor's Note: See Mr. Coriell's letter on Burroughs.

SHORT YARNS ADMIRABLE

Hmmm, U published still another of my monstrosities.

U add a touch of whimsey, and jist look at the number of favorable reports U get from us people. "The Devil's Spoon" was liked by the majority of fen writing in, wasn't it? U sold many copies of that particular ish, didn't U? That proves that there is a spot for sweetness and light in F.F.M., doesn't it? How 'bout 'nother one along the same order?

Anyway, (pardon me if I seem to be crude 'n' rude) leave U publish no such other stuff like "The Lion's Way." I don't have nothing agin the story. Really, I enjoyed it. 'Twuz very nicely written. The plot wuz very nicely handled. Mr. Stoneham did a very nice job.

But I can't see (with or without glasses) what possible connection the story had with scientifiction or fantasy? Gorsh, Editor, if I wanted to read a Tarzan-like tale I'd buy "African Adventures" or some such mag, not F.F.M.

The shorts were jist about the best selection U've published fer quite a while. Bradbury's was jist a wee bit more sinister than the rest —admirably written, too. Tenn's tale was a give-away from the beginning. Any fantasyokel who's been reading the shake-and-shiver stuff fer any length of time could have spotted the vampire.

Tho every once in awhile the author crosses us readers by making the narrator the vampire (or werewolf, or zombie, or Thing).

"That Low" was another "cute" story. It ranked high.

Really, the contents of the mag was improved by these three stories. Can U get more like 'em?

The cover was very nicely done—very nicely symbolic. When are we going to have Finlay do another demon cover? He puts *such* a lovely leer on his monsters!

Glad to see Clyne back. All the interiors

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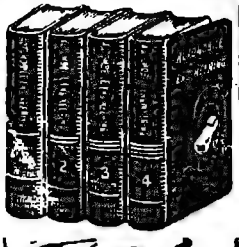

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were (U guessed it) very nicely done. Ron does a good job; what better company could he keep than Finlay and Lawrence?

I would like to see a Bok weird, tho.

TRV fer the ish was rather short. Fer shame, letting the most important part of the magazine take a cut. By all means, either cut out a short story, or cut part of the lead novel —never, never, cut the size of TRV.

One last word here: *Attention Fan Mag Editors.* I will be glad to subscribe to yer mags.

Remember—On To The Cincon!

DECIL.

170 "C" St., Apt. No. 2,
Upland, Calif.

Editor's Note: We advise "fans" interested in "The Cincon" to write Donald E. Ford, 129 Maple, Sharonville, Ohio.

BRADBURY EXCELLENT

I perused the new F.F.M. at the home of a friend yesterday, so will make a few notes. "The Women" by Bradbury was excellent, but could not atone for the mediocrity of the Sturgeon and Tenn pieces. As for the Tenn, why take an anemic vampire piece like this when there is available the deservedly immortal "Dracula," a book most certainly *not* dated, and remarkably akin to Merritt in spots? Or there is Benson's excellent "Mrs. Amworth." Tenn's bit was pitifully obvious and forced. As for the novel, since when is second-hand Burroughs-Tarzan adventure classifiable as fantastic mystery"? Why not reprint these "wolf-boy" or "gazelle boy" news articles, while you are at it? (I might add such stories are usually proven false.) . . and this is the mag that thrilled us with "Claimed," "The Moon Pool," "Darkness and Dawn," "The Man Who Was Thursday," etc., etc. O tempora! O mores!!

"Well—better luck next time. Meanwhile I'm still waiting for the reprints we F.F.M. veterans want!

BEN INDICK.

443 Jersey Ave.,
Elizabeth, N. J.

CAN YOU TELL HIM?

This letter will be composed mainly of questions, some of which have plagued me for years. Any kind-hearted reader who will take the trouble to answer them for me may be assured of my sincere gratitude.

First off, I'd like to know in what issues of *Thrilling Wonder Stories* did Stanley Weinbaum's "A Martian Odyssey" and "Time's Mausoleum" appear? (It is my belief that these stories were printed in that magazine, is that correct?) . . Did A. Merritt write any fantasies after "Creep, Shadow!", other than those completed by Hannes Bok? . Can someone give me a list of the titles in Tod Robbins' "Silent, White and Beautiful"? . When did *Weird Tales* put into effect its no-reprint policy? What was the last story by H. P. Lovecraft to be printed therein?

Who did the original illustrations for "Darkness and Dawn"? (One of them was repro-

duced in the issue of F.F.M. that featured "D and D", and bore a striking resemblance to the work of Frank R. Paul.) . . In what year and for what magazine did Paul do his first art work? Ditto Virgil Finlay. . . . Did Ray Cummings' "Tarrano the Conqueror" ever come out in book form? Would like to obtain this story, mag, or book, preferably the book, if any. . Can anyone supply me with a bibliography of the published works of John Taine? Have tried for ages to get a complete list of this writer's stories, without success.

For those interested, I have many back issues of *Amazing Stories, Fantastic Adventures, Thrilling Wonder Stories, Startling Stories,* and several books, all in good condition. These I will sell outright, or trade for back issues of *Weird Tales,* prior to 1944.

JAMES ELLIS.

604 10th St., S. W.,
Washington 4, D. C.

Editor's Note: The illustration used as an end piece for "D and D" in F.F.M. was the only picture in the original, as we remember.

NEEDS C. A. SMITH BOOK

For the enclosed $1.75 please enter my subscription to *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* for one year and send me the new portfolio of illustrations by Lawrence.

I need to purchase a good, clean copy of Clark Ashton Smith's "Out of Space and Time" with dust wrapper, for study purposes. And I would be very grateful and indebted to anyone who has a copy and is willing to sell it to me if he will contact me as soon as possible, giving condition and price.

If I cannot locate a copy for sale, I would then greatly appreciate it if someone would be willing to lend me a copy for a few weeks. I guarantee its safe return and of course would assume all mailing or shipping costs.

CHARLES D. MINOGUE, JR.

103 Hillside Ave.,
West Orange, N. J.

LAWRENCE'S COVER . . .

"The Lion's Way" was a fairly interesting novel. I liked the way C. T. Stoneham handled the plot to the finish. It will be a long time before I forget the character, Kaspa. Many thanks for this fine novel of dark trails.

Lawrence's cover for this was superb. Only the interior illustrations fell short, though I liked the ones on page 23 and 53. Those for the short stories were putrid.

JAMES W. AYERS.

609 First St.,
Attalla, Alabama.

STURGEON IN FIRST PLACE

Having bought the new issue of your magazine, I hasten to comment on it, and speak of the fiction and features in the order in which my attention was drawn to them. Therefore,

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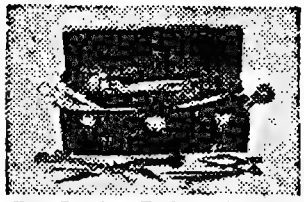

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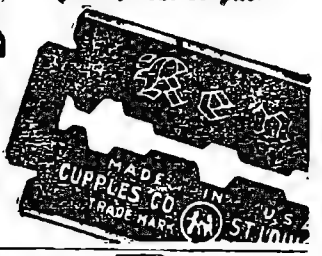

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the first thing on which I comment is the cover, which is presumably symbolistic, although the symbolism of it is just as cloudy as the moon which overcasts the scene.

Of the inside illustrations, the Finlays for the novel were well done, but promised too much fantasy, so that the story would have been disappointing, had I not known your illustrative policy of exaggerating fantasy elements, before. The illustrations for the short stories were fair, but, from Sturgeon's story, I got the impression the Mrs. Hallowell was an ugly pudgy woman, and, in the picture, she was just the opposite. Masters of Fantasy was not as well done as usual, and the biography, as usual, was too much praise and not enough biography.

In the short stories, Sturgeon takes first place, because he has a new plot and has, in a couple of pages, exhausted its possibilities. Bradbury is second, having taken a bit of fluff and poured his magic with words onto it. Tenn, who works well only with a strong idea, did the worst of all possible jobs on his chestnut.

But ah, the novel! As one of the letteriters said, it isn't that I don't like third-rate adventure stories, but that I prefer to pay my 25c for fantasy.

And now for some tentative suggestions. I would like to see reprinted: Anything by John Collier, Stapledon, London, or Machen, and restricted amounts by Benét, Wells, Haggard, and Dunsany. Also, I wish to repeat my plea for "When William Came," or anything else by Saki which could be called fantasy, and for anything which could be called fantasy by mah ideel, Clarence Day.

MICHAEL WIGODSKY.

7744 Ridgeland Ave.,
Chicago 49, Ill.

TENN MOST ENJOYED

I was quite surprised—pleasantly so—to perceive the name of my favorite writer on your contents page. I believe—subject to correction—that this is Ray's first story for you. His moody, distinctive prose style enhanced and balanced your fine publication very agreeably. Here is one earnest plea for many, many more such by Writer Bradbury. Thank you, thank you. Amen.

Now to work. We shall attempt forthwith to dissect the lesser aggregates which made up the very captivating Oct. issue. "The Lion's Way" by C. T. Stoneham was—and I'm sure you realized it when you printed it—very impressive, very commendable adventure. But it was not fantasy! (Cuss yo'!) It did not belong in "our" mag as such. Please, leave us forsake such outré policies and bring on the fantasy. Please!

William Tenn's neat little "The Human Angle" was most enjoyed. I did not, needless to say, fathom the rather startling ending till the next to final paragraph. Which was, no

doubt, just when Author Tenn intended. Hooray for Willy Tenn—more of him too, please.

"That Low" failed to strike a responsive chord in me; and therefor I will not attempt to rate same. One man's meat may very possibly be another's poison.

The Readers' Viewpoint was acceptable in all ways, with some extremely readable letters.

Dear Editress, I do hope you see fit to comment on each effort in the above dept. to a greater degree in the future. It will be most appreciated.

I have *Astonishing, Super Science, Amazing, Thrilling Wonder* back as far as 1935 or thereabouts in vintage, which same I will be glad to trade.

I herewith invite all correspondence, irrespective topic or theme, and will promise to answer promptly to same. Just open up with both barrels; I'll reply with like vigor.

R. F. DIKEMAN.

Church St.,
Brooktondale, N. Y.
Box 101.

Editor's Note: Bradbury has appeared before in F.F.M.

THANKS TO READERS

Recently, through the medium of your Viewpoint, I asked for help in securing 1948 issues of F.F.M. and F.N. May I take this opportunity to thank some readers for their unselfishness and kindness, in making my plea an overwhelming and gratifying success?

It is surprising how many really swell people there are, in this scarred old world of ours.

The following persons have my sincerest thanks:

Mr. Gordon Stoeckler, Washington, D. C., Mr. Ralph Bailey, New York, N. Y., Mrs. John E. Beamer, Bedford, Pa., Mr. H. W McAllister, Walla Walla, Wash., Mr. W. C. Durrett, Berea, Ohio, R. T. Cook, Fonda, Iowa, M. B. Wolf, M.D., Chicago, Ill., J. W. Thomas, Valley Falls, R. I., J. T. Oliver, Columbus, Ga., Mrs. Zeda P. Mishler, Johnstown and Norman Ashfield, England.

A really "reet" bunch of folks. Perhaps some day we Canadian fans may be able to return this favour in one way or another—I hope so.

So once again, thanks a million, folks, and thanks to you, Editor.

Sincerely,
J. J. STAMP.

28 Churchhill Crese,
Georgetown, Ontario, Canada.

WANTS TO START POLL

I wish to say thanks for honoring Edgar Rice Burroughs in your Masters of Fantasy. I'm glad that you have gotten him in your magazine in at least some form.

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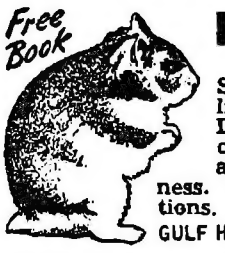

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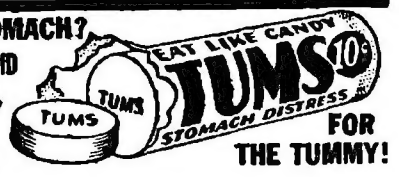

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miles exept your running mate F.N., but there can be improvements in any magazine).

The main story, "The Lion's Way", was very enjoyable, but again you have leaned over toward the adventure side.

Your first short, "The Women", didn't belong in your magazine as far as I'm concerned.

Your second short "The Human Angle" stopped me in my tracks. What an ending it had to it! I had to read the last line over several times before it sunk in, and when it did, I didn't know whether to laugh or feel sorry for poor Jim Shellinger.

The last short was much better than the first but it didn't have the kick to it that "The Human Angle" did.

The cover was just fair (in my poor opinion). Kaspa and the lion looked as if they were made out of clay or stone, but I guess that's the way they were supposed to look with the moon shining on them. But where was Kaspa's curly hair? As much as the author mentioned it, it surely shouldn't have been omitted.

Finlay's interiors were good.

Now for the main reason that I'm writing you. I would like to start a poll of what stories the individual readers would like to see printed in F.F.M. or F.N.

The reader should put the one he wishes would be printed above all others at the top of his list, the second next to the top, and the third one last. They will receive points like this. No. 1—2 points. No. 2—1.5 points and No. 3—1 point. Or if you like all three stories just the same, say so, and I'll give each story 1.5 points, as each person is allowed 4.5 points.

I will then sent the first 10 stories in that order with the number of points alongside, to the Ed. So come on, fellas and gals, get out your penny postal card and start writing. You may help your favorite story get printed.

One of your many devoted readers,
PAUL MOORE.

2266 Benson Dr.,
Dayton 6, Ohio.

LIKED "THE HUMAN ANGLE"

I am very disgusted with Vol. 10, No. 1.

75 per cent of it was trash. "The Lion's Way" was nothing more than a cheap adventure story. It had no plot whatsoever. The only good things about it were the illustrations by Finlay. Shame on you for printing such a story.

"The Women" and "That Low" didn't even make sense. They seemed to have the start of a plot, but just as you caught it, the story ended! To think that two great writers like that could sink so low.

Now for the other 25 per cent.

The only good story was "The Human Angle". It had an aura of tenseness about it right from the start, and when he couldn't look at her teeth: "Because they were in his throat"—boy, what an ending!

I still remain a loyal fan—

MARVIN HIRSH.

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